TSOLA DRAGOYCHEVA

# MACEDONIA – NOT A CAUSE OF DISCORD BUT A FACTOR OF GOOD NEIGHBOURLINESS AND COOPERATION

## Recollections and Reflections

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. . . . . .

I intend to shed light here on a subject which at that time* long held the attention of the Party and the National Committee of the Fatherland Front (FF)[1]: *the question of Macedonia's future.*** This subject, as well as the problem of the anti-fascist struggle (its methods, forms and means), and the problem of the structure and socio-political character of the future FF Bulgaria were practically never off the agenda of the National Committee sessions.

The letters exchanged between Dr Kiril Dramaliev[2] and myself will show the reader that we made efforts to put off the discussion of the Macedonian issue; it had no direct bearing on the most immediate tasks of the Fatherland Front. Its discussion, therefore, distracted the attention and diverted the forces from the immediate objective of the struggle: to overthrow the monarcho-fascist regime and to drive the nazis out of Bulgaria. The war was still raging and we feared that the disputes likely to arise around that issue, far from contributing to its proper solution, might throw a monkey wrench into the united struggle of the Balkan peoples against the common enemy: fascism and the nazi aggressors.

Our considerations, however, were not heeded – our partners strongly insisted that we formulate our stand on the question of Macedonia's future now without any delay, turning the discussion of this problem almost into a *sine qua non* for their remaining in the Fatherland Front.

As matters stood, we naturally had to give in. The con-

* 1942-44 (Ed. note)

** My italics unless stated otherwise (Author's note)

cession boiled down to a readiness for discussion; the Party leadership did not even contemplate the possibility of a compromise in principle on this issue, whose misinterpretation might tomorrow complicate the relations of FF Bulgaria with new Yugoslavia and the other Balkan states. Then, as theretofore, the Bulgarian Communist Party was profoundly convinced that Macedonia should no longer be the apple of discord between the Balkan states and that the time had finally come when this land would turn into a connecting link, helping to unite the Balkan peoples and to make them fraternize in their democratic development. It was our firm conviction that henceforth the settlement of these issues had to be based on the free self-determination of the peoples, on their will to decide their own destinies, without any outside pressure.

And so I pass on to the

## STATEMENT OF THE FATHERLAND FRONT ON THE MACEDONIAN ISSUE AND PERTINENT DISPUTES. . . .

This Statement was published in the Bulletin (No 1) of the National Committee, as well as in Rabotnichesko Delo[3], No 12, 1943. Entitled 'The Fatherland Front on the Macedonian Issue', it publicly elucidated for the first time the attitude of the Fatherland Front (and hence also of the Bulgarian Workers' Party[4]) on this highly delicate problem, which in the past had divided and pitted the Balkan bourgeois-monarchic regimes against each other and had been the cause of tragic fratricidal wars between the Balkan peoples. This problem had to find at long last a principled and just solution and from a cause of conflicts and bloodshed had to turn into a source of friendship and fraternal cooperation.

The problem of Macedonia's future was put forward for discussion by our allies; Kimon Georgiev[5] was the first to raise it late in September.

In his letter addressed to me, dated September 30, 1943, Dr Kiril Dramaliev wrote among other things:

'After concluding the matter of the bulletin, K.G. addressed us in the words: "Gentlemen, have you ever thought about the fate in store for Macedonia?"... N.P. (Nikola Petkov[6]): "Can't we put off a little issuing the leaflet and include in it something about Macedonia." I objected: "By no means, the leaflet is terribly late as it is."

'Our partners evinced an interest in the Macedonian issue and a readiness to write on it, which were completely absent as regards the leaflet and even the bulletin. This is the swan song of Bulgarian nationalism.... The fascists continue to brandish the banner of a "united" Bulgaria when its very existence is in jeopardy....

'In my opinion, at this juncture the treatment of this issue is a hot potato, but if handled very carefully and correctly, it should be to the benefit of the Fatherland Front at home and in Macedonia. I enclose a hastily composed draft. Have your say, amend and supplement it. You are more familiar with the position of the Serbian comrades and consequently will more easily avoid a possible slip in the formulation. A session with a special issue on the Macedonian question on the agenda will probably be held Tuesday or Wednesday....'

Kimon Georgiev's (and then Nikola Petkov's) insistence on discussing the Macedonian issue 'now and without any delay' considerably embarrassed the Central Committee, chiefly because their initial stand on this question did not differ much from the official position of the ruling regime.

The stand of the Communist Party on this issue was naturally quite different: it proceeded from the Leninist conception of the national question and was imbued with the spirit of consistent revolutionary internationalism, characteristic of our Party from its very inception. Our immutable starting principle (neither ad hoc, nor tactical) was Lenin's formulation* familiar to every communist:

**Lenin, V.I.*, Works, V.30, p.293

'Provided there is unity in the struggle against the yoke of capitalism and for a dictatorship of the proletariat, there should be no differences among communists on the question of national frontiers, of a federal or any other linkage between the states.' Said in view of a possible later emergence of disputes between two neighbouring communist states, these words were valid in principle in this case, too, although the socialist revolution had not yet triumphed either in Yugoslavia or in Bulgaria. That is why the Party leadership did its best to take off the agenda the untimely discussion of this question in the National Committee. We tried to convince our partners that the issue could and should be resolved after the fundamental national task facing the Fatherland Front had been accomplished: to drive the nazis out of Bulgaria and to topple the treacherous fascist police regime and hence, after the victory over fascism and the invaders in Yugoslavia.

This stand of ours, however, was not shared by our allies in the Fatherland Front; at almost every subsequent session of the National Committee they put forward this problem for discussion, turning it almost into the leitmotif of their general political activity. Our endeavour to avoid a rupture or a conflict, which might undermine the success of the cause, was the only reason why we accepted the discussion of this subject, without, however, retreating from the principled Party position on the national question.

The next letter dealing with the Macedonian issue, this time written by myself and addressed to Dr Kiril Dramaliev, is dated October 22, 1943. As transpires from its contents, Dr Dramaliev had again informed the Central Committee about insistent talks on this problem started by the allies. Here is the answer to his question contained in my letter:

> '2.... I am affraid that these chaps deliberately put "The Macedonian Question" as the first article in the bulletin. They are out to check how far our concessions would go....

'On this, and in general on other questions as well, on which we are sure beforehand that difficulties will arise in our work with them, we should look well in advance for ways of evading their suggestions. It does not follow in the least that we have no opinion on this question. Has not the Party voiced its view on the Macedonian issue on all more special occasions which have arisen in the Balkans? It seems to me that what you are writing about is precisely the Party stand, more than once stated orally or in writing....

'That is why even the YCP (Yugoslav Communist Party) comes out only with instructions that all that will be demanded now for the Macedonian population is a better self-government in the municipalities and the preservation of the economic wealth for the people, and when the Balkan problem is resolved after the Germans have been driven out, then one of the Balkan questions put forward will be that of Macedonia. There is no danger that this question will be solved only by Serbs or only by Bulgarians....

'In any case, don't be in a hurry to cut them short. There is no harm in saying that you still do not have the answer of the p. l. (Party leadership) on this question... and in principle – speak in the vein familiar to you...'

The letter reveals the predicament in which Dr Dramaliev found himself as the Party's representative in the National Committee: on the one hand, he had to continue the dialogue with the allies on the question of Macedonia while, on the other, he had to put it off till the final clarification of the Party position on this issue. And not because, as I explicitly emphasized in the letter, the Party had not now or earlier formed its stand on these problems, but because we wanted to take into consideration the views of the Bureau in Exile[7] and of Georgi Dimitrov on this question in the present circumstances.

We were, of course, fairly well acquainted with *the*

*stand of the Yugoslav Communist Party on this question up till then.* It did not differ from the stand of the rest of the Balkan communist parties, nor from our own;i.e. the problem of the fate of Macedonia had to be resolved not now, but later, after the main and fundamental question facing all parties and peoples in the Balkans and Europe, the defeat of the nazi invaders, had been resolved....

In the disputes in the National Committee on the question of Macedonia's future, a new element is apparent in my letter to Dr Dramaliev of October 27, 1943. As can be seen, it is an answer to his questions put in a preceding letter addressed to me.

> 'Again on the Macedonian issue.
>
> 'If those gentlemen sincerely wish to come out with a document which will deserve the attention of all Balkan states, if they sincerely wish a pacification of the Balkans, then two-thirds of K.G.'s letter should be expurgated. This is not the time to preoccupy ourselves with history and with what separates us, but with today's topical problems and with what unites us. Small wonder if self-determined Macedonia may wish to be one with Bulgaria, but this is a postwar question. What should now be uppermost is the thought: "To do everything possible so that Macedonia and the Macedonian issue no longer be the apple of discord in the Balkans...." '

The quoted passage suggests that the talks on the Macedonian issue had already advanced to a new phase – the coordination of a concrete text which would express the concerted stand on this question of all parties, social groups and forces in the Fatherland Front. An article, specially prepared for the occasion by Kimon Georgiev, served as basis during the negotiations. The positions stated in it were those of our other allies in the Fatherland Front as well,

and it was therefore imperative to defend the Party conception on this problem patiently and carefully while staunchly sticking to our principles.

I would like to draw the reader's attention to that part of the letter, where the probability is explicitly pointed out that after the war 'self-determined Macedonia may wish to be one with Bulgaria'. I underline – *after the war* and *self--determined.* The leadership of the Bulgarian Workers' Party was profoundly convinced that this was a quite real eventuality and far from ruled out the probability of that part of Bulgarian territory and population rejoining the confines of free Bulgaria, but on the strict observance of the principle of voluntary and free self-determination of the people, without any pressure and any outside interference, without taking advantage of conjuncture moments and without resorting to force.

A few days later, after new meetings with the allies in the National Committee, Dr Dramaliev informed me about the progress of the talks on the subject of interest to us:

'I raised the question about the bulletin. Both of them (Kimon Georgiev and Nikola Petkov) stated that first the article on the Macedonian issue should appear and that we should hurry up with it.... I informed them that, in our view, the greater part of the article... was not fit to be published by the FF, because it would again open up old wounds, would reanimate the just subsided disputes, and would not contribute to a Balkan entente.... Both of them firmly opposed this. N.P. saw nothing wrong with those passages. K.G. pointed out that this whole historical exposé had the task of convincing Bulgarian public opinion and the Bulgarian people of the need to adopt as slogan a free and independent Macedonia; what mattered was that a solution of the problem was offered. I pointed out to him that we back this slogan with arguments without resorting to an antithesis....

'It is clear that the Macedonian issue is becoming an obstacle impeding the whole activity of the FF. It is my impression that they will not agree to the publication of a bulletin or a leaflet before the Macedonian article has come out. I cannot resolve this problem on my own responsibility. That is why I send you the article with a passage which may satisfy them. By Tuesday you must advise me whether I should propose the article in this form or, in general, how I am to proceed. As you yourself pointed out in your letter, the question is quite thorny and difficult to resolve. But it is you and your comrades who alone are entitled to determine how far we can go in making concessions without impairing the interests of P. (Party). K.G. was not shocked by the slogan of self-determination and an address to the Balkan peoples....'

The letter gives an exact idea of how far the disputes on this issue had gone within the National Committee. From its contents it also transpires that the members of the National Committee were confronted at that moment with the discussion and coordination of de facto two versions of the future statement on the Macedonian issue – our version and the one drafted by Kimon Georgiev.

I would like to draw the reader's attention here to the last phrase in the quoted passage of the letter – it indicates an important progress in the stand of the allies (chiefly of Kimon Georgiev) on the Macedonian issue; they now showed greater readiness to accept the slogan of 'self-determination of Macedonia' – our foremost principle in the stand on Macedonia. Obviously our efforts along these lines had to continue: in most of the members of the National Committee and especially in Kimon Georgiev we detected a readiness for understanding and acceptance of the reasonable principles underlying the party conception on the national question, the Macedonian question included. All the same, let us not rush....

Dr Dramaliev's letter of November 11, 1943, contained an important information on the development of the dialogue in this respect with the FF allies. He wrote there among other things:

> 'K.G. insistently put forward for discussion the Macedonian question. He handed out a typewritten copy to everybody. He was quite emotional in defending his article. He admitted that in our draft too there were many good things which should go into it. But the sacrifices made by Bulgaria for the sake of Macedonia should be pointed out. This was necessary so as to convince the officers' circles that, in spite of all, there is now no alternative to an independent Macedonia. Otherwise it would be impossible to work among them.'

And further on:

> 'The general impression from this meeting is that K.G. and N.P. defend and will defend their stand on the Macedonian question in a concerted and stubborn manner. When in the end I asked again for a new solution of the Macedonian question by publishing the first issue of the bulletin with a review and appraisal of the international and domestic situation, N.P. was dead set against it, saying: "Let us first clear up the Macedonian issue"... For the first time K.G. on two occasions showed irritation at the unambiguous threat that the National Committee would not be able to work unless a stand acceptable to the officers' circles is taken on the Macedonian issue. Gr.'s (Grigor Cheshmedjiev[8]) attitude to the Macedonian issue was somewhat closer to our own, his interest in the *chetas* (bands) – obviously favourable; he felt a need to be convinced of the serious character of this movement, all the more so as he had lost faith in the readiness of the officers. K.G. has never said

anything more approving of the officers. He pointed out their sobering or, to be more precise, their activation as a long-range prospect.

'As matters stand, the Macedonian question is a particular obstacle in our work. All my arguments that this is not a central question are stubbornly rejected, especially by K.G. I am looking forward to your exact formulation of our stand...'

Dr Dramaliev did indeed note correctly that 'the Macedonian question is an obstacle' in the work of the National Committee, but I must make clear – it was no longer insurmountable. The differences between us and our FF allies were increasingly melting, the knot of contradictions around this problem was unravelling, which meant that the ship of unity had escaped shipwreck. But, as it will become clear further on, time had to pass, and fresh efforts had to be made to reach a final agreement on a common stand.

And one more remark in connection with the quoted passage from the letter. In his disputes with us Kimon Georgiev openly and frankly expressed his disagreement. And just as openly, realistically and definitely he stated his agreement, as soon as he became convinced in the correctness of our positions. A process of crucial reappraisal of old values continued in the mind of that astute politician: he boldly broke with his old political complexes, which enabled him to make an ever growing contribution to the success of the common cause.

The role of Nikola Petkov stood out all the more negative against the backdrop of Kimon Georgiev's constructive contribution: now he would agree to individual suggestions of ours (without clearly indicating why), now he would disagree with most of our ideas (without frankly explaining the substance of his stand); now he would support the policy of armed struggle, now he would categorically oppose the actions of the partisans and combat groups (urban guerrilla); now he would defend the

Fatherland Front, now he would be against the FF committees. Nikola Petkov would change his opinion with every passing day, thus fanning an atmosphere of insecurity and tension, of vacillation and distrust in the National Committee. This called for boundless patience, adroitness and tactfulness on our part, in order to maintain and further promote the unity and creative cooperation of the forces in the National Committee.

My letter to Dr Dramaliev of November 16, 1943, quoted below, shows that the discussion of the Macedonian question had obviously reached its final phase, i. e. the Party leadership had now formulated its stand and had specified the contents of the future joint declaration to be published on behalf of the Fatherland Front. What is more, let me stress, now again we strictly abided by Georgi Dimitrov's instructions.

Here are the passages from my letter to Dr Dramaliev, concerning the subject of our interest:

'We dealt not only with the Macedonian question, but in general with the situation in the Balkans in connection with the international situation and future prospects . The chief culprit for the misfortune of the Yugoslav peoples is pan-Serbian chauvinism – today's refugees in London, together with the king and his clique.They sided with Paris and London until they realized that the forces of the Axis were becoming stronger. As soon as they understood that these same hegemonists and imperialists endeavoured to switch over to the Axis so as to maintain through fascism the domination over the countries given to them by the Versailles Treaty: Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia, Montenegro, Albania and Macedonia.

'Taking advantage of these internal contradictions, Hitler already then pursued a policy of "divide and rule". For years on end he supported the Ustashi bands which engaged in terroristic acts and assaults allegedly for the freedom of Croatia, while at the same

time inciting the Yugoslav hegemonists, i.e. the pan-Serbians, to rule with an iron hand.

'Another weakness and evil has been to this day the fact that in their fight for liberation the countries oppressed by the pan-Serbian chauvinists directed their struggle not only against those directly guilty of their lost freedom, but against the whole Serbian people, who did not suffer less under the yoke of those in power.

'Therefore, when speaking today of Yugoslavia, it should be realized that this new Yugoslavia has nothing in common with imperialist pan-Serbian Yugoslavia.

'Unity of action of the Balkan states means their being guaranteed against any imperialist encroachments on them, from wherever they may come.....

'The fact that the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, that of Serbia included, which is actually fighting a historical duel against fascism today, leads and educates the peoples in the process of the struggle to win their national freedom and establish equality between the peoples in the Balkans, is a guarantee that the Serbian and Greek kings and the power-seeking cliques, which would have again "pacified" the peoples by means of executions and gaols, will not be permitted to reimpose an imperialist yoke. All peoples will be given the right to self-determination, including the right to secession. Secession is, of course, not imperative if the people of the individual countries become aware of the advantages deriving from their federation based on genuinely democratic principles. On that basis alone can the Macedonian question be considered...

Let K.G. and N.P. ponder over it. Which is more important: unity among all Balkan peoples in tne struggle to win equal rights and freedoms for Bulgaria, too, which is still hitched to the bandwagon of the perishing nazi gang, or playing with imperialist

formulations, which will only worsen our situation tomorrow. . .

'Explain to them openly the stand of our Party, not only as regards the Macedonian issue, but also for what kind of a democratic power we are fighting. For the one referred to in the FF programme. We shall incise its content in our history, not in words but by deeds....'

Thus the common stands were completely elucidated. Still, a last barrier, small but essential, had to be overcome to finalize a mutually acceptable text. It is referred to in my letter to Dr Dramaliev dated November 19. Let me quote this short passage:

'... I have already written to you what matters most in re the Macedonian question. We cannot make compromises... If they decide to go because of this, they will only obliterate the boundary between themselves and those who are outside the FF. Today it is not a question of a "united Bulgaria", which is only a base disguise of the nazi agents before the people...'

As can be seen from the quoted passage, the allies in the Fatherland Front were still showing obstinacy on individual phrases and individual formulations which, nowever, lent the whole text an unacceptable ring.

To our gratification our principled stand on the question at long last met the common sense and realism of our partners, at first in the person of Kimon Georgiev, who then influenced the others.

Thus, in November, even before the Second Session of the AVNOY(Anti-fascist Vecě (Assembly)for the People's Liberation of Yugoslavia) had been convened in the town of Jajce (of which there will be more further on) and without suspecting the intentions of the YCP, we succeeded (after

three months of discussions and disputes) in agreeing upon the text of the FF Statement on Macedonia. We decided to publish it immediately and did so: the Statement appeared simultaneously in the FF Bulletin (No 1) and in the December issue of the Party organ,*Rabotnichesko Delo.*

I shall quote the full text of this historic document:

## THE FATHERLAND FRONT ON THE MACEDONIAN ISSUE

Macedonia is the apple of discord of the Balkan peoples. Rivers of blood have been shed for it: the chetas' movement against the Turkish state, the Ilinden (St Elija's Day) Uprising and the mutual exterminations of Bulgarian, Serbian, Greek and Albanian detachments, the First and Second Balkan Wars and the involvement of the Balkan states in World War I, as well as in the present world war – all this has considerably depopulated Macedonia. Instead of bringing about its liberation and independence, it has turned it into a land of sufferings and extermination.

'Every Bulgarian humbly and reverentially bows his head before Macedonia. The cradle of the Bulgarian Revival, its old as well as most recent history is filled with the apostolic lifework of the brothers Cyril and Methodius, and with the inspiration and creative efforts of a number of prominent cultural and religious figures. During the Ottoman domination *Bulgarians and Macedonians** fought common battles for liberation. After the establishment of a free Bulgarian state, the fate of enslaved Macedonia has always been close to the heart of the Bulgarian people and they paid dearly for its liberation.

'The liberation struggles waged by the population of Macedonia and the Adrianople region will remain legendary. However, both that population's independent struggles and the wars waged to liberate it, far from im-

*Here the use of the concept 'Macedonians' has a regional meaning,referring to the Bulgarian population in the province of Macedonia (Author's note)

proving the fortunes of Macedonia and Thrace, only worsened them. This came about, because the small Balkan states in their rivalry, and owing to the blindness of their rulers, turned away from the true road leading to a free and independent Macedonia.

'Bulgaria as well as the other Balkan states have been paying a stiff price for their overenthusiasm and historical errors, which justify the curse of generations and the verdict of history.

'Is there any hope that an end will at long last be put to that Golgotha of the Balkan peoples? This hope rests on the principles underlying the Atlantic Charter, which guarantees the peoples' economic, political and cultural freedom. The Atlantic Charter has also been accepted by the Soviet Union, which is bound to play an important role in the postwar structure of the world and of the Balkans in particular.

'The Balkan peoples have only one way of reaching an agreement and of peacefully settling the Balkan issues. This way was indicated by Rakovski, Karavelov, Levski and Botev, as well as by the Serbian public figures Svetozar Markovic, Garasanin and others. It is a way that has been forgotten.

'Bulgaria's tsarist government hitched our country to the Axis bandwagon, let the German troops pass into the Balkans and sent occupation corps* not only to Macedonia but also to other parts of Yugoslavia and Greece. That government looked upon it as an opportunity to incorporate Macedonia within the confines of the Bulgarian state. It forgot that in his book "Mein Kampf" Hitler had preached that "national-socialist Germany was to be the master of the world" and that, driven by that imperialist world outlook, he did not stand on ceremony and in March 1941, by virtue of a treaty, recognized the whole of

*The concept of 'occupation corps' used here also as regards Macedonia, was an expression of the principled stand of the BWP and the Fatherland Front against the forcible annexation of Vardar Macedonia by Bulgaria (Author's note)

Macedonia, Salonica included, as part of Yugoslavia. Only General Dimovic's coup thwarted that Shylock's deal of the Führer.

'Intent on avoiding any new historical errors and on giving firm assurances to Macedonia, THE FATHERLAND FRONT RAISES THE SLOGAN "MACEDONIA FOR THE MACEDONIANS". This slogan will put an end to the rivalries between the Balkan states. No modifications of the existing fragmentation introduced by the enemies of Macedonia, nor an integral joining to any of the Balkan states.

'THE ONLY SALUTARY SOLUTION IS INTEGRAL, FREE AND INDEPENDENT MACEDONIA. IN THIS WAY ALONE WILL IT CEASE TO BE A BONE OF CONTENTION AND WILL TURN INTO A SOUND CONNECTING LINK BETWEEN THE BALKAN PEOPLES.

'The Soviet Union and the forces of democracy will be guarantors of a free and independent Macedonia. In order to attain this major historical goal, genuine people's gevernments should HEAD the Balkan states, alien to all imperialist encroachments, which would uphold the principle of independence and self-determination of the Balkan peoples.

'The citizens of all Balkan states should fight by all means for the immediate overthrow of the fascist governments and for the establishment of people's democratic rule in the Balkans. Through its Fatherland Front, the Bulgarian people appeal to all their neighbours to rally under that only salutary slogan.

'Long live the free self-determination of Macedonia!

'Long live the fraternal agreement of Bulgaria with the Balkan nations!

FATHERLAND FRONT

Bulgaria. December 1943'

These, then, were at that time the positions of the Fatherland Front and of the Party leadership on the Macedonian issue which we explained frankly to the progressive Bulgarian and Balkan public. We were profoundly convinced that only in this way could the principles of the Atlantic Charter, adopted by the states of the anti-nazi coalition, be embodied, a Charter which after the victory was to underlie relations between all countries in the Balkans, in Europe and all over the world.

Our position on this question was an expression of the profoundly consistent internationalist traditions of our Party from the period of left wing socialism and was close to the spirit of the national liberation organization headed by Gotse Delchev and Yané Sandanski; it was an organic continuation of the revolutionary Marxist-Leninist views of Dimiter Blagoev[9] and Georgi Dimitrov on the question of Macedonia. Moreover – let me emphasize this – our position *fully coincided with the stand taken up till then by the whole Balkan communist movement and the Comintern on this entangled problem. In a nutshell, it boiled down to the slogan 'Macedonia for the Macedonians', admitting the right of that region to independent existence without joining 'any other Balkan state'.* Only thus could Macedonia cease to be the 'apple of discord' between the states in the Balkan Peninsula.

Any unbiased contemporary cannot but acknowledge the noteworthy maturity manifested by the Bulgarian Workers' Party; strong enough to overcome the narrowly nationalistic sentiments, it placed the interests of peace, tranquility and good-neighbourly relations in the Balkans above everything else. Although organically inseparable from the centuries-old national, political and cultural history of Bulgaria, this Bulgarian land was to have tomorrow a destiny as freely decided upon by its population in the name of its own well-being and for the good of all Balkan peoples.

Here I must add right away that our stand on this problem was in consonance with the general spirit and principled formulations, developed in an article of the Yugoslav

Party leader J.B. Tito, which appeared in the December 1942 issue of *Proletar* (organ of the CC of the YCP) and was reprinted almost in extenso in *Rabotnichesko Delo* of November 1943. This is what the author wrote there among other things: 'True to its principles that every people have the right themselves to decide their destiny, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia continuously fought the nationalistic policy of the pan-Serbian hegemonists. It foursquare opposed the oppression of Croats, Slovenes, Macedonians, Albanians, Montenegrins, etc.' Further on, pointing out that *'Versailles Yugoslavia, born in bloodshed, has become Europe's most typical land of national oppression'*, J. B. Tito explicity stated: *'Croats, Slovenes, Montenegrins were oppressed peoples, unequal subjects of Yugoslavia; Macedonians and Albanians were enslaved and subjected to extermination;* Moslems, German and Hungarian minorities served as a bargaining chip, as a tool in the struggle against Croats and the other peoples in Yugoslavia...' In conclusion J.B.Tito emphasized: *'The Atlantic Charter does not mean making frontiers at the expense of other peoples, but it should mean a free self-determination of the peoples. . .'* And further on: *'After the victory all peoples will be able to decide their own destinies.'*

Along with these declarations, with which we agreed and which we accepted with gratification, the article also contained some disturbing ideas about a 'common Yugoslav meaning of the national liberation struggle', about 'the common victory of all peoples in Yugoslavia', in the name of 'the genuine freedom, equality and fraternity of all peoples in Yugoslavia', the people of Macedonia included. Rightly or not, we interpreted these ideas in the spirit and in the context of the above principled declarations, construing them in the sense of the common stands on this question up till then, jointly hammered out by all the Balkan communist parties. That is why we published that article in our Party organ.

That is how matters stood until the autumn of 1943.

But precisely then late during that year (November 29), the Second AVNOY Session was convened in the town of Jajce. This high forum was an event of historic significance for the struggles and destinies of the Yugoslav peoples who were heroically resisting the nazi invaders. It is not my task to fully comment and appraise its decisions. Here I draw the attention only to that part which concerned Macedonia. By proclaiming the establishment of 'a federal, democratic Yugoslavia', the AVNOY constituted itself as a supreme Yugoslav legislative and executive body. Taking the decision to build Yugoslavia on federal principles, the Second AVNOY Session emphasized the importance of *voluntariness* in including the peoples in that federation and of equal rights within the common state; the decision was taken on the basis of 'the right of every people to self-determination, including also the right to secession or unification with other nations in conformity with the true will of all peoples in Yugoslavia...'

In contradiction, however, to the spirit of this principled position, the Second AVNOY Session decreed that *the Macedonian issue be resolved within the framework of Yugoslavia:* '...Yugoslavia is being built on a federal principle,' the decision read, 'which will ensure complete equality of rights of Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Macedonians and Montenegrins, respectively of the peoples of Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina...'

What the Jajce decisions of AVNOY actually implied was that, a) arbitrarily and solely of the YCP's will, the Macedonian question ceased to be a general Balkan question; b) the other Balkan revolutionary forces were being deprived of the right to take part in its correct solution and were placed before a fait accompli; c) in spite of the principle of 'voluntariness and self-determination, including the right to be separated from or united with other nations', even now, before the war was over and without taking into consideration the will of the people, Macedonia's future was being predetermined; d) Macedonia's inclusion within

federal Yugoslavia was presented as the only alternative to its free existence....

There was something else, particularly portentous: the decisions alluded not only to the region of Vardar Macedonia (which until the war's outbreak had been part of the kingdom of Yugoslavia), but to the whole of Macedonia, i.e. the other two regions – Aegean and Pirin Macedonia, respectively parts of Greece and Bulgaria....

And while predetermining the total inclusion of Macedonia in the future confines of federal Yugoslavia (without seeking the concurrence of and without even informing the BWP and the Greek Communist Party), the Yugoslav leadership decided to include in the AVNOY Presidium Mico Andonov-Čento and Mihailo Apostolski as representatives of Vardar Macedonia, Vladimir Poptomov as representative of Pirin Macedonia and Dimiter Vlahov as representative of Aegean Macedonia; Vlahov was elected vice-chairman and Apostolski, Andonov-Čento and Poptomov – members of the AVNOY Presidium.*

It would be an understatement to say that these decisions of AVNOY, delineating a complete turnabout in the positions of the YCP, came as a surprise to us. And this is understandable. Because by taking these decisions the YCP retreated from the common internationalist position adopted till then by the Balkan revolutionary forces on the question of Macedonia's destiny. This stand of the YCP

*Dimiter Vlahov and Vladimir Poptomov, Bulgarians from Macedonia (the former from Aegean and the latter from Pirin Macedonia) were well-known activists of the Bulgarian Communist Party and functionaries of the Comintern. In my book *The Storm* I had the opportunity of including short sketches about both of them. As to Dimiter Vlahov, in the early '30s he worked in Paris as a representative of the Bureau in Exile of the BCP.
The two Bulgarian Party functionaries were elected to the AVNOY leadership without their prior knowledge and consent. Upon learning about his election to the AVNOY leadership, Vladimir Poptomov categorically and indignantly refused to have any part in that manoeuvre, while D.Vlahov, on the contrary, adroitly took advantage of the opportunity to 'swap' his nationality for the sake of a political career.

ran also counter to the position, expressed in the Statement of the Fatherland Front on the future of Macedonia.

Let me repeat: we were not only surprised but also profoundly shocked. We had to conclude regretfully that the YCP was resolving the Macedonian question from a position of strength.

For the sake of fullness as regards the historical truth, I must add that the CC of our Party learnt about the Second AVNOY Session and about the decisions it adopted on Macedonia only in the spring of 1944, a good deal of time after the publication of the Statement of the Fatherland Front. At the time we attributed that delay to the difficulties in maintaining contacts between the two communist parties. Later, however, we had to note regretfully that the reason had been quite different: the Yugoslav leadership, pursuing its well-planned goals, had deliberately kept secret these decisions from the Soviet Union, from the BWP and from the Greek Communist Party. As we were able to find out after the war, it was General Korneyev, head of the Soviet military mission, who managed – and at that only in the spring of 1944 – to get hold of the complete minutes of the decisions taken at the Second AVNOY Session. And he was the first to inform Moscow about them.

A few words must be said here about the First AVNOY Session, held in November 1942 in the town of Bihač. The CC of our Party was informed about it through separate incomplete materials and by envoys of the YCP. The Politburo had entrusted me with keeping in touch with them.

The decisions adopted by the First Session were essentially two: 1. Setting up of AVNOY, and 2. Appeal to the peoples of Yugoslavia. According to the resolution adopted, 'the fundamental task of the Anti-fascist Veče (Assembly) for the People's Liberation of Yugoslavia will be to further step up the common efforts of all Yugoslav peoples for their complete liberation and to pave the way for their complete freedom and equality in a liberated fraternal community...'

It becomes clear from the quoted passage that even at its First Session the AVNOY strove to delineate the frontiers of future free Yugoslavia by preserving the prewar Yugoslav territory. This position still modest in its ends, obviously had in view not the whole of Macedonia, but the Vardar part of it, attached to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia after World War I.

The CC of our Party received, of course, the information about that resolution with reservations because it dealt with the future and revealed intentions rather than clearly defined positions and decisions. Even then we declared to the Yugoslav comrades that we accepted their information only for the record; we did not consider it a renunciation of the common positions concerted till then by the YCP, the BWP and the GCP, which required a general Balkan solution of the Macedonian question to be taken after the war with Soviet assistance and with due respect for the will of the peoples.

This is precisely the sense in which our Central Committee interpreted J.B.Tito's article, published in the December issue of *Proletar*.

Here I would like to add something to my notes about the First AVNOY Session in Bihač, which reveals the atmosphere of that period. First of all, no representatives of Macedonia were present at that session, which obviously set itself highly important wartime and postwar objectives. And this was by no means fortuitous. As Yugoslav documents reveal, this was connected with the open resistance of the Macedonian population to any attempts to re-establish the prewar status quo of Vardar Macedonia. The Party leadership of the region had to take the sentiments of the masses more or less into account. This refers not only to the first Regional Committee headed by Metodi Shatorov-Sharlo, but also to a number of Party leaders imposed after he was eliminated, including the committee headed by Dobrivoe Radoslavlevič, set up after August 1942 (D. Radoslavlevič was a former YCP instructor for Macedonia, sent to disown the secretary of the Regional

Committee at that time, Bane Andreyev, who was suspected of being a 'pro-Bulgarian agent' and a 'die-hard Sharlovist', i.e. a follower of Metodi Shatorov-Sharlo).

In the spring of 1942, when the YCP started preparations for convening the First AVNOY Session and launched the intention of restoring Yugoslavia's prewar territorial integrity, considerable discontent became rife among the population of Vardar Macedonia. The people's unwillingness to go back to Yugoslavia was so spontaneous and strong that the Regional Committee of the YCP in Skopje took the decision to rename itself District Committee of the Communist Party of Macedonia. In his letter dated November 22, 1942 to the CC of the YCP, D. Radoslavlevič wrote: 'Whether we like it or not, the signature YCP repels the masses, leaving the impression that we are beforehand tying the fate of the Macedonian people to Yugoslavia and not letting them decide it themselves. The Macedonian people incredibly fear a return to Yugoslavia... '*

In spite of the dissent of the people, however, the First AVNOY Session, convened only a week later (with no representatives of Macedonia), laid down the above-quoted thesis of restoring Yugoslavia's prewar territorial integrity, including Vardar Macedonia.

The resolution of the First AVNOY Session, as well as the trend of turning the Macedonian issue from a common Balkan issue to an internal Yugoslav question, a trend which was ever more clearly taking shape in the YCP,set off a new wave of discontent among the Macedonian population and the Macedonian communists. This compelled the CC of the YCP in February 1943 to send to Skopje the Montenegrin Svetozar Vukmanovic-Tempo with 'unlimited powers'. His task was to 'purge' the Macedonian party organization of all 'inconvenient' elements susceptible to the sentiments of the masses in favour of Macedonia's

*Извори за ослободителна војна и револуција во Македонја. 1941–1945. Т. 1. Кн. прва. Скопје, 1968, с. 397.

return to Bulgaria or of an independent Macedonia. The trend of a unilateral, internal Yugoslav settlement of the Macedonian issue greatly intensified with the appearance of that ill-fated functionary. The slogan of a 'united Macedonia', which started to appear in the documents of the YCP in mid-1943, was also associated with his activities. Until then the Yugoslav party leadership had had claims only as regards Vardar Macedonia. Again under the pressure of Tempo, in October 1943 the General Staff of Macedonia published a manifesto (of which we learnt only after September 9, 1944), in which for the first time it unambiguously insisted on the unification of the whole of Macedonia and on its inclusion within the boundaries of Yugoslavia. Obviously, all that had been a preparation for the impending Second AVNOY Session...

As might have been expected, that manifesto, as well as the whole propaganda intensively fanned by the YCP and the General Staff of Macedonia in this vein, ran into the opposition of the majority of the Macedonian population. A large part of the communists were also indignant, perceiving in these positions a betrayal of the common concerted internationalist line of the Balkan communist parties. The most outspoken expression of that discontent was the formation of the so-called Action Committee of the People's Liberation Front of Macedonia, which was joined by the former combatants in the St Elija's Day Uprising and the whole of the progressive youth of Macedonia (among the leaders of the Action Committee were also today's Yugoslav politicians X.Bogoev and Kiril Grigorov, now Kiro Gligorov, a lawyer from Stip, and until recently Chairman of the Federal Assembly of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia). The Action Committee rejected the right of the General Staff to issue such a document of programme importance, which moreover ran counter to the wishes of the masses. At the same time in its written 'Notes' on the manifesto, the Action Committee definitely stated that the future Yugoslavia was 'too narrow' a political framework for the settlement of the Macedonian issue and

pointed out that the only correct road to its true solution was a Balkan federation...

Unfortunately the YCP leadership did not heed either the opinion of the Action Committee, or the explicit wish of the Macedonian population. This led to the Second AVNOY Session in Jajce, where the question of Macedonia as a future component part of federal Yugoslavia was predetermined.

It is worth noting that now, as at the First AVNOY Session, no delegates from Macedonia attended.... Obviously this was an expression of the fear that the Macedonian functionaries, although carefully culled, might surprise the AVNOY with some undesirable obstructions.

The YCP's attempt to keep the decisions taken in Jajce secret should again be ascribed to the fear of a principled opposition. It thus strove to face the other Balkan communist parties, as well as the Soviet Union, with a fait accompli. Incidentally, the prominent Yugoslav politician V.Bakaric wrote about that unseemly tactics in one of his later publications: 'I must confess that the exact decisions which AVNOY was to take were kept by us a secret from the Russians, from the Comintern, from the world. The reason for this was that earlier at the First AVNOY Session the Comintern had opposed our intention to set up anything resembling a government...'*

These decisions, as I mentioned above, became known to the Soviet Communist Party (Bolsheviks)[10], to Georgi Dimitrov and then to us as late as the spring of 1944. They flagrantly violated the common Balkan line previously coordinated by the revolutionary forces and unilaterally imposed, *from a position of strength,* an internal Yugoslav, intrinsically nationalistic, pan-Serbian settlement of the Macedonian issue.

I believe that it would not be superfluous for the reader if I broadly sketch the historical development of that ques-

*Бакарич. Вл. *Како смо радили и где смо сада.* Сп. НИН. 8.XI.1970 № 1035, Београд.

tion up to the moment when it was again assuming political topicality.

The Macedonian issue came to the fore almost automatically with the act of our liberation from Ottoman bondage in 1878. The San Stefano Treaty concluded between Russia and Turkey after the successful conclusion of the Russo-Turkish War of Liberation[11] provided for an independent Bulgaria within its old historical and ethnic boundaries. The Berlin Congress[12], however, guided by the selfish interests of the West European powers, dampened the enthusiasm over the liberation: Bulgaria, which had been just resurrected, was brutally trimmed territorially, while the Bulgarian people were mercilessly partitioned. The old Bulgarian lands of Macedonia and the Adrianople section of Thrace remained outside the national frontiers and the night of foreign rule again descended upon them.

'By virtue of the Berlin Treaty,' Dimiter Blagoev, the dean of socialism in Bulgaria and in the Balkans, wrote, 'the Bulgarian nation was carved up into parts, mainly two of which – the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia, now South Bulgaria – were liberated, although they were separated by widely differing administrations and rights. Of Bulgaria's other parts one remained under Turkish rule, while the others were incorporated into Serbia and Romania.'

This is how the Macedonian issue arose or, still more comprehensively, the question of the national liberation of all Bulgarian lands still smarting under Ottoman bondage. Thus was born the legitimate idea of the national unification of the partitioned Bulgarian nation.

The first act of mass popular resistance against the Berlin diktat was the Kresna-Razlog Uprising of 1878-79. It was a direct continuation of the spirit and traditions of the April 1876 Uprising[13] and pursued the dual goal of national liberation and unification with the free parts of the homeland. The uprising swept across the enslaved lands of the middle reaches of the rivers Strouma and Mesta, but was spontaneously and warmly supported by the whole

Bulgarian community. Having broken out with elemental force, it set examples of patriotic readiness for self-sacrifice and heroism. After six months of bloody battles, the Kresna-Razlog Uprising was ruthlessly quashed, but it demonstrated to the world the Bulgarian people's boundless readiness to fight and die for their liberation.

The activities of the Internal Macedonian Adrianople Revolutionary Organization (IMARO), which was founded in 1893 and waged long years of struggle against the Ottoman yoke, also most cogently testifies to the Bulgarian character and essence of the Macedonian issue. The founders of the first revolutionary committee in Salonica – Damyan Grouev from the village of Smilevo, Bitola region, Dr Hristo Tatarchev from Ressen, Ivan Hadjinikolov from Koukoush, Peter Poparsov from the village of Bogomila, Veles region, Anton Dimitrov from the village of Aivatovo, Salonica region, and Hristo Batandjiev from Goumendje – were representatives of the Bulgarian intelligentsia which had been formed in Bulgarian educational establishments and had been nursed with the ideals of the Bulgarian revolution. This is equally true of the other prominent IMARO functionaries and leaders: Gotsé Delchev, Gyorché Petrov, Peré Toshev, Yané Sandanski, Dimo Hadjidimov and others. The bulk of the organization's membership was made up of Bulgarian peasants and craftsmen, Bulgarian teachers and clergymen.

IMARO continued the cause of the national revolutionary movement prior to the liberation. It raised the slogan of autonomy for Macedonia, leaving the problem of a unification with the liberated part of the homeland to be resolved later, in conformity with objective conditions and possibilities in the Balkans. Here is what Damyan Grouev wrote in connection with the attempts to found IMARO before 1893: 'We intended to found an organization after the model of the revolutionary organizations in Bulgaria prior to the Liberation, to act following the example of Botev, Levski, Benkovski, etc. We had studied that organization. Zahari Stoyanov's "Notes...."[14], for instance,

had influenced us as had also the Bulgarian revolutionary literature of that time in general.'

Here are thereminiscences of Dr Hristo Tatarchev, the first president of the CC of IMARO, about the foundation of the organization and the drafting of its first statute: 'We had at hand a copy of Zahari Stoyanov's "Notes...." and from them we took as a model the statute of the Bulgarian Revolutionary Committee. We entrusted Poparsov with working out a draft of our statute on the basis of that statute...'

The earliest preserved statute of the organization, called STATUTE OF THE BULGARIAN MACEDONIAN AND ADRIANOPLE REVOLUTIONARY COMMITTEES, reads in part that the committees should work among 'the Bulgarian population' in Macedonia and the Adrianople district; membership is open to '*any Bulgarian*, irrespective of sex, who has not compromised himself in the eyes of the community by dishonest and immoral actions and who promises to be of service in some way to the revolutionary cause of liberation.' On joining a committee, each new member took the following oath: 'I swear by God, my faith and my honour... that I will fight to the death *for the freedom of the Bulgarians* in Macedonia and the Adrianople district, and that I will submit unconditionally to the leadership and willunprotestingly carry out its orders...' (Art. 15 of the Rules).

This statute and the rules were composed by Gotsé Delchev and Goyrché Petrov in the spirit of the decisions of the organizing congress, convened in 1896. Gotsé Delchev and Gyorché Petrov, as well as other prominent IMARO functionaries, repeatedly and on different occasions pointed out *the Bulgarian character of the majority of the population in Macedonia*, as well as the fact that the organization had been founded *as a Bulgarian one* and in the beginning admitted to its ranks *only Bulgarians.*

Later, when the revolutionary movement grew in scope, the leaders tried to expand IMARO's composition by admitting to it also the other oppressed nationalities in

Macedonia and the Adrianople district. In this sense they introduced amendments to the statute on the eve of the St Elija's Day Uprising as well as after it. However, no particular success was achieved in that respect.

The names of the political parties and organizations founded after the Young Turkish revolution of June 1908 likewise testify to *the Bulgarian character* of the national liberation movement in Macedonia and the Adrianople district. The right-wing within the liberation movement founded a party named *Union of Bulgarian Constitutional Clubs,* while the adherents of the left wing headed by Yané Sandanski, Hristo Chernopeyev, Dimo Hadjidimov and others organized themselves into *the Bulgarian People's Federal Party*; the teachers rallied in *the Union of Bulgarian Teachers in Turkey*, etc. All documents, as well as the newspapers of these parties and organizations, were published in the literary Bulgarian language.

As is known, the St Elija's Day Uprising organized by IMARO ended in a bloody defeat without bringing either liberation or unification of the oppressed Bulgarians from Macedonia and the Adrianople district with the liberated parts of Bulgaria.

The Macedonian question was further complicated and exacerbated as a result of the wars at the beginning of the century (the two Balkan wars of 1912-1913 and World War I in 1914-1918). New lands of the national territory were torn off from the body of Bulgaria, and new compact masses of Bulgarians were forcibly separated from the national community.

Dimiter Blagoev focussed his attention on the Macedonian issue very early, before the emergence of an organized socialist movement in Bulgaria. This was quite natural for him, as it was a festering wound in the heart of the Bulgarian people. All the more so as he was a Bulgarian hailing from enslaved Macedonia (born in the village of Zagorichané,Kostour district which, in his own words, was 'inhabited only by Bulgarians').

After Dimiter Blagoev's extradition from czarist

Russia, in his first article on the national question, entitled 'A Balkan Federation and Macedonia', he first advanced the idea of a Balkan federation:

'... There is an ill-starred corner in the Balkan Peninsula–*Macedonia,'* he wrote. 'The Berlin Treaty promised autonomy to Macedonia but this treaty may be said to be nothing but a cruel irony as far as the Balkan nationalities are concerned, *especially* as regards Macedonia and us, Bulgarians, in general' (*Makedonski Glas*, /Macedonian Voice/ No. 16, April 20, 1885). * Blagoev then went on to explain that 'a Balkan federation... should aim at liberating Macedonia and at granting all nationalities in the Balkan Peninsula broad freedom of self-government and socialization of their material and moral means...'

After the emergence of an organized socialist movement in Bulgaria and of the Bulgarian Workers' Social Democratic Party (BWSDP)**, the Party policy on the Macedonian issue took shape. It was pursued along three lines: (1) unmasking the nationalism and chauvinism of the bourgeoisie in all Balkan states; (2) propaganda of the socialist theory among the Bulgarian workers and intellectuals in Macedonia; and (3) support of the national revolutionary liberation movement in Macedonia against Ottoman rule.

Dimiter Blagoev gave a most careful orientation to the Party policy on this issue. Even then he pointed out that 'It would be an inconceivable absurdity to assume that Macedonia's final liberation and particularly its unification with the liberated Bulgarian regions will be possible without a bloody revolution' (*Delo* magazine, No 10, July 1895). Further on he emphasized that the accomplishment of the "national tasks" without disastrous consequences for the Balkan peoples and impairment of their independence and freedom was possible within the framework of a Balkan federation.An idea, 'bequeathed already by Botev and Karavelov'.

*D. Blagoev's italics (Author's note)

**Forerunner of the Bulgarian Communst Party (ed. note)

As the Party matured it came to play a more active role in the struggles of the working class and to step up its support for the national liberation movement, while increasingly exposing the bourgeoisie, which was trying to exploit the movement in Macedonia and the Adrianople district for its own selfish ends.

In the wake of the St Elija's Day Uprising (1903) the Balkan bourgeois-monarchic regimes fiercely set on tormented Macedonia with propaganda and arms, not only in order to gain influence but also to forcibly assimilate the Bulgarian population. The BWSDP (left wing socialists) angrily exposed the chauvinism and aggressive encroachments of the Balkan bourgeois cliques, while condemning the endeavour of the Bulgarian bourgeoisie to use for its own interest the Internal Macedonian-Adrianople Revolutionary Organization (IMARO), weakened by the rout of the uprising.

At that time Dimiter Blagoev staunchly defended the internal revolutionary forces whose motto was 'Macedonia for the Macedonians' (*Novo Vremé* review No 6, June 1905). To him the IMARO did 'indeed present numerous attractive aspects' and was 'a truly revolutionary organization relying on the masses within Macedonia...' He then pointed out how much that organization stood to gain by deepening its internationalism and by linking up with the Balkan and international social democracy. In that article the criminal activities of the Balkan bourgeoisie was mercilessly bared: 'Macedonia,' he wrote, 'is today the arena of a nationalistic struggle of extermination of armed Greek, Serbian and Bulgarian bands. And since in the three provinces falling under the "reform programme" the Bulgarian element is larger than any individual element of the other nations, and since its aspirations to be united with the liberated Bulgarians are tangibly growing, the Greek and Serbian bourgeoisie, with the connivance of Turkey and of the reformist forces "markedly interested" in the Balkan Peninsula, are sending armed bands to annihilate the Bulgarian bands and the Bulgarian element in Macedonia.'

In this connection the 13th Congress of the BWSDP (left wing socialists), held in 1906, adopted a special resolution, which exposed the criminal acts of the Balkan bourgeoisie and stressed that the socialists would work for the liberation of the Macedonian slave, while pointing out that social democracy in Bulgaria, which had made massive sacrifices for the liberation movement in Macedonia, 'is working steadfastly for the awakening of the Macedonian slave and will continue to do so...'

On the eve of the First Balkan War the BWSDP (1.–w.s.) stepped up the struggle for unity of action of the Balkan working class and its socialist organizations. To the war-mongering and hegemonistic policy of the Balkan bourgeoisie it opposed its programme of establishing a Balkan federal republic, which would resolve the unsettled national problems. It did not raise the question of joining Macedonia and the Adrianople district to the Bulgarian state, ragardless of the undisputedly predominant Bulgarian character of those regions. At the First Balkan Social Democratic Conference convened on its initiative in Belgrade in January 1910, it called for a struggle to establish a Balkan federal republic. As is known, it then drew the attention of the Serbian Social Democratic Party to the fact that the resolution submitted by the latter contained 'absolutely no criticism of the policy of the Balkan bourgeoisie'.

During the First Balkan wars and World War I, the BWSDP (1.–w.s.) firmly stuck to the position that the Macedonian issue, as well as the other unresolved national questions in the Balkans, could only be settled within the framework of a Balkan federal republic, 'in which all Balkan regions would be included as autonomous members and all Balkan peoples would mutually guarantee their national and cultural independence.'

It should be pointed out here that the Bulgarian character of Macedonia, Thrace and Dobroudja was not

disputed in the least by any revolutionary movement in the Balkans.

Imposing the Neuilly diktat of 1919[15], the imperialist powers chopped off new lands from the body of Bulgaria.

All parties of the working class, united in the Balkan Communist Federation, came out against that cruel injustice towards the Bulgarian nation and in defence of the Bulgarian population which had remained outside the confines of its homeland: they resolutely unmasked the criminal policy of the Balkan bourgeois-monarchic regimes, which had annexed large territories and masses of people of Bulgarian and other Balkan nationalities. In this connection the Balkan Communist Federation published on August 20, 1920 a 'Manifesto to the Working Classes in the Balkan and Danubian States', signed by all members of the CC of the BCP, by the Executive Committee of the YCP and a representative of the CC of the Greek Communist Party . Among other things, the Manifesto read:

' Balkan and Danubian proletarians!

'Great hopes were pinned on the world war that it would liberate and unite the subjected and dismembered peoples.

'The Balkan peoples were also dragged into the war in the name of an illusory unification. Today it is clear to all that the war has caused new fragmentation and enslavement of a multitude of peoples. *The Bulgarian people have been ruthlessly partitioned. Compact masses in Macedonia, Thrace and Dobroudja are under foreign domination...'*

The refugee and emigration problem came to the fore as an aftermath of the wars, but also as a result of the brutally suppressed popular uprisings in the enslaved Macedonia and Adrianople district (the Kresna-Razlog and the St Elija's Day Uprisings). Large masses of the native Bulgarian population streamed from Macedonia and the Adrianople region, and later from Aegean Thrace, Dobroudja and the western parts to the confines of the liberated parts of the homeland; they fled either from the sword of the cruel enslaver, or from the terror of the new oppressive regimes in the kingdoms of Serbia, Greece and

Romania, which were trying to obliterate the Bulgarian character of these lands by force of sword and systematic national assimilation. Welcomed as brothers among brothers of the same blood, these suffering refugee masses, numbering hundreds of thousands, settled in almost all towns and villages in Bulgaria. Considerable masses of them, however, settled in the limitrophe regions, in the hope that some day the enslaved native hearths would be restored to the motherland.

Dimiter Blagoev, the founder of socialism in Bulgaria and in the Balkans, belonged to those suffering masses of refugees and emigrants; the parents of Georgi Dimitrov, the future teacher and leader of the Party and the people, were also among the families of those forcibly driven out of their native lands; hundreds of other outstanding functionaries and leaders of the BCP, eminent scholars and men of culture, public figures and politicians were also the sons and daughters of such families.

Indissolubly connected with the fate of its people, the Bulgarian Communist Party could not remain indifferent to the sufferings and legitimate aspirations of the huge masses of refugees. It warmly supported their just demands, while most resolutely backing the struggle of the population in the enslaved regions for national liberation and social emancipation. The close links with the national revolutionary movements in Macedonia, the Adrianople district and Dobroudja were cemented precisely on this basis, as they rallied under the same banner and in the name of common goals both the population in the enslaved lands and the emigrant and refugee masses.

As to the national revolutionary movement for the liberation of Macedonia and the Adrianople district in particular, the Party supported, as I pointed out above, its struggle from the very beginning. The interaction was particularly strong in the period when the movement was headed by Gotsé Delchev and Yané Sandanski. After World War I, however, the leadership of the IMARO, deprived of its champions and having lost a galaxy of

magnificent revolutionary leaders, gradually fell under the spell of nationalistic sentiments. The BCP made vigorous efforts to preserve that organization from the chauvinistic poison instilled by the bourgeois-reactionary regime, trying to draw it into the ranks of the united anti-fascist front. It managed to do so after the September 1923 Uprising[16], when it succeeded in drawing into united actions the left wing of the IMRO, which stood relatively closest to the revolutionary ideals of Gotsé and Yané. An expression of that success was the well-known May Manifesto signed in Vienna in 1924, which appealed for common struggle against the national and social oppressors both in the free parts of Bulgaria and in the enslaved territories. The documents, signed by the IMRO leaders Todor Alexandrov, Peter Chaoulev and Alexander Protogerov, incensed the monarcho-fascist rulers; soon afterwards, under the pressure of the government of the Naroden Sgovor (popular concord), T.Alexandrov and A.Protogerov reneged on their signatures. A few days later the henchman General Roussev, Home Minister in Tsankov's Cabinet, engineered the assassination of Todor Alexandrov, and subsequently, in 'retaliation', he organized the murder of quite a few prominent militants of the left-wing of the Macedonian revolutionary organization. From that moment onwards IMRO fell entirely under the control of the monarcho-fascist regime and turned into a tool of its nationalistic policy.

This necessitated in the autumn of 1925 the founding of a new Macedonian revolutionary organization – IMRO (united) with the assistance of the Party, which rallied around itself the true followers of Gotsé Delchev and Yané Sandanski and in fraternal cooperation with the BCP launched a struggle for the national and social liberation of the enslaved Bulgarian and other population in Macedonia. The new organization made efforts to spread its organizational network throughout the Macedonian population, but it was more or less successful mainly among the Macedonian emigration.

In the meantime the BCP and the Balkan Communist Federation further developed the idea of a Balkan federation. Whereas in the beginning the socialist movement had been in favour of resolving the national question within the framework of a Balkan democratic federal republic, after the October Revolution it came out for a Balkan federal socialist republic, and subsequently for a Federation of Balkan worker-peasant republics.

In its resolution on 'The Political Situation and the Party Tasks', the Mt Vitosha Conference (1924) dwelled among other things on the Macedonian question as well. Noting the ambitions of the Balkan monarchies to establish a hegemony in the Balkans, the resolution made it incumbent on the BCP 'to most categorically and energetically support the movement for national liberation' of the population in Macedonia, Thrace and Dobroudja.

Further on the resolution reads:

'The CP should establish a close alliance with the communists in Yugoslavia in order to coordinate their attitudes in support of the national movement for *an autonomous and independent Macedonia.* It should likewise coordinate its actions with the CP in Greece and Romania.'

The Yugoslav Communist Party, too, raised a voice of protest against the oppression of the Bulgarian population in Vardar Macedonia.

*'The Serbian bourgeoisie,'* the resolution of the Third Party Conference of the YCP held in 1924 pointed out, *'has established a regime of extreme terror in Macedonia; it destroys or drives into emigration the most conscious sections of the Bulgarian, Turkish and Albanian population, replacing them by settlers from other parts of Yugoslavia.* It oppresses their churches and schools, bans their press and forbids their language.'

Georgi Dimitrov, too, expressed concern over the complication of the national question in the Balkans. At an enlarged plenum of the Balkan Communist Federation in 1925 *he pointed out that the policy of denationalization,*

*practiced in Macedonia, Thrace and other parts of the Balkans concealed the danger of new military conflicts.*

The second underground conference of the BCP held in December 1927 – January 1928 adopted a detailed resolution which read:

'The Macedonian question has been and remains a general Balkan question. In its geographical location and ethnic variety Macedonia symbolizes the unity and indivisibility of the Balkan Peninsula.'

Exposing the pillage, terror and policy of denationalization pursued by the Serbian bourgeoisie in Vardar Macedonia, the resolution then indicated the defeatist and treacherous conduct of the local Bulgarian bourgeoisie; associating itself economically with Yugoslavia and its political and state organization, it not only stopped resisting the denationalization policy pursued by the royal Serbian regime, but even became its vehicle and diligent agent: 'The same bourgeois strata, which in the past were apostles of great Bulgaria, now turn their backs upon it, renege on their former Bulgarian orientation, proclaim themselves Serbs and give the signal for the Serbization of Macedonia.'

In the end of the resolution, the BCP declared 'its overall support for the Macedonian slaves... in their struggle for complete national self-determination, including the separation of a united Macedonia as an independent state.' The BCP then added that the fragmented and enslaved Macedonian population 'cannot attain its freedom and independence unless it enters into an alliance with the working class and peasant masses in the Balkan states and unless a worker-peasant rule has triumphed in them.'

Considerable distortions were allowed in the subsequent period of left sectarianism[17], not only in the theory but also in the practice of the class revolutionary movement. An erroneous nihilistic approach to the solution of the national question was also imposed. However, with the overcoming of the left-sectarian infantile disorder, the nihilistic bias, which had inhibited the Party policy on the fate

of the enslaved lands was almost entirely eliminated. The Sixth Party Plenum (1936) appealed for the unification of all honest revolutionary forces in the name of a united and independent Macedonia and emphasized 'the right of the Macedonianpeople to self-determination, including its separation as a state'.

The Party stuck to this line during the next period too. In October 1940 in the editorial 'The Macedonian Question Today', published in the Party organ *Rabotnichesko Delo,* its Central Committee clearly differentiated its political line from the intentions of the big Bulgarian bourgeoisie. Opposing Bulgaria's involvement in the war, the article sharply criticized the rulers who deceived the people that this would bring about the liberation of Macedonia and the realization of 'the centuries-old aspirations for unified Great Bulgaria':

'There is no greater self-deception and criminal insanity than the idea,' the article read, 'that Macedonia's freedom can be the fruit of Bulgaria's involvement in the imperialist war. All the new imperialist war can bring to the Macedonian population, so greatly afflicted by the past two wars, is new, greater devastation and new, still heavier bondage.'

One the eve and after the outbreak of World War II, the Bulgarian Workers' Party continued to systematically seek and strove to promote fraternal cooperation with the Yugoslav Communist Party, as had been established in the days of the latter's foundation. Relations and cooperation between the two parties had a sound basis and were determined by the common character and the common goals in the name of which the struggle of the oppressed classes in the two neighbouring states was unfolding. A factor of exclusive importance in this respect was the fact that the two parties were member-sections of the Third Communist International, by virtue of which they adopted as the common foundation of their ideological and political activities the principles of Marxism-Leninism and applied the strategy and tactics hammered out by the collective leading

organ of the world revolutionary movement. Along with this, there were also other very favourable prerequisites which conditioned and stimulated the close relations and unity of action between the two parties: the common social and ecomic problems facing the peoples of the two countries; the approximately same level of the productive forces and socio-economic relations; pronounced ethnic, cultural and linguistic affinities, deriving from their common Slav origin; a similar historical destiny; old revolutionary traditions of joint struggle in the period of the national liberation movements against the Ottoman enslaver, and after Bulgaria's liberation – cooperation of their class and revolutionary movements in the struggle against capitalist exploitation and the wars; the revolutionary ties and cooperation of the Bulgarian communists, participants in the September 1923 Uprising, who after its rout found the ready assistance of the Yugoslav communists, etc.

All this provided a natural and sound basis for a constructive cooperation between the BWP and the YCP, particularly now that the nazi boot was brutally treading upon the whole of Europe, the Balkans included, violating the freedom and national independence of all peoples; precisely now the times made it imperative that the ties, friendship and interacion between the two revolutionary forces flourish to the utmost.

What is more, I can add that up to the spring of 1941 there was mutual trust between the two communist parties; the question of averting the fascist threat of a war was uppermost along with the revolutionary relations and cooperation in prevailing over the bourgeois regimes in the two countries. The two parties reckoned that the existing territorial and national problems would be correctly resoved only after the victory of a people's rule in the two countries. The YCP repeatedly stressed that the Bulgarian people had been wronged by the Neuilly Treaty, that these injustices had to be justly resolved not through military carnage and internecine annihilation of the Bulgarian, Greek and Yugoslav peoples, but through their fraternal agreement.

Such was also the meaning of the joint Declaration signed in February and March 1941 between the YCP and the BWP central commitees. A summary of that Declaration was published in the Party organ *Rabotnichesko Delo* in the first half of June of that year. It drew the attention of the peoples in the two countries to the immediate danger of the wars spreading to the Balkans and appealed for vigilance as regards the intentions of the imperialists, who by means of pressure, intrigues and threats were exploiting the national contradictions between the Balkan states (especially the disputes over Macedonia), stemming from the unjust Versailles and Neuilly treaties, in order to embroil them and to hurl them again into fratricidal wars, from which only the imperialists stood to profit. Further on, while acknowledging the right of the Macedonian pupulation to freedom and equality, the Declaration raised the slogan of neutrality between the two warring blocs and appealed for firm abidance by the positions of the Soviet Union –'... the sole mighty neutral Great Power today, which visually shows that it alone is the force actually and consistently fighting for peace and for circumscribing the conflagration of the imperialist war.'

'This is the only road in the present circumstances ' the Declaration explicitly stated, 'still capable of keeping Bulgaria and Yugoslavia out of the imperialist war, of saving the Balkan peoples from the disaster threatening them, of safeguarding their state independence and of creating *the prerequisites for the settlement of the existing national and other disputes in the Balkans by peaceful means.'*

The BWP resolutely supported the struggle waged by the Yugoslav peoples against the nazi aggressors and sharply exposed the policy of the Bulgarian monarcho-fascist government[18]. In a leaflet issued in March 1941, its Central Committee stated: 'The Bulgarian people fraternally shake the hand of the Yugoslav working people, who are courageously fighting in defence of their freedom and independence. The Bulgarian people will not permit the

Bulgarian reactionaries and adventurists to fan hatred and chauvinism, to hurl them into a criminal fratricidal war against the Yugoslav peoples.'

The BWP most energetically supported the Yugoslav Communist Party later, too, when it unfurled the banner of a sacred struggle against the nazi invader. We, Bulgarian communists, wholeheartedly hailed the successes of the Yugoslav comrades in this struggle, which was to gradually involve almost the entire population of that country. Years of unheard-of trials and mass heroism in the name of the freedom and national independence of the enslaved homeland started for that country and its people. The struggle of the Yugoslav peoples headed by their heroic Communist Party was to inspire thousands of Bulgarian antifascists, who rose arms in hand against the detestable fascism, to exploits and self-sacrifice.

Now too the Bulgarian Workers' Party invariably stood on internationalist positions on the national question, tirelessly unmasking the chauvinism of the bourgeoisie. *In 1941, after the defeat of Yugoslavia, it did not take advantage of the conjuncture and did not accept the slogan of Macedonia's annexation by Bulgaria, but recognized 'the right of the Macedonian people to decide their destinies themselves in a free, united and indivisible Macedonia'.* (Central Party Archives, f.3, op.4, archive unit 590).

The radical change in the international situation, which set in after the nazi aggression against the USSR, raised to a higher stage the Balkan anti-fascist resistance and at the same time stepped up the process of building international solidarity. The struggle waged by the USSR and the other peoples of the anti-nazi coalition opened up before the Balkan peoples the prospect of strengthening their unity so as to defeat their enslaver. At the same time that struggle set the urgent task of contributing to the victory of the Soviet Union over the nazi aggressor.

Immediately after June 22, 1941, on the very first day of the armed struggle against fascism, , the CC of the

Bulgarian Workers' Party made the utmost efforts to establish a militant cooperation with the communist parties in the Balkans. In its leaflet of July 27, 1941, it stated: 'Fighting together with the other peoples against fascism and contributing to its defeat, we are fighting for our own freedom and independence, for genuine and complete national unification, for fraternal concord with the other Balkan peoples.'

In November 1941, the CC of the Party came out with a leaflet, in which it most vehemently opposed the nazi-planned occupation of Eastern Serbia by Bulgarian troops. The official Bulgarian press defended that criminal act by the fallacious assertion that Bulgaria would thus be able to 'partially repay' nazi Germany for the attained 'national unification.' The 'new lands' brought within Bulgaria's confines were indeed actually old Bulgarian regions forcibly torn away by the unjust peace treaties of 1878, 1913 and 1919. But in actual fact these regions were not finally returned to our homeland but only temporarily placed under Bulgarian monarcho- fascist administration and were under the supreme control of the nazi invaders. Second, and most important, that 'unification', accomplished by way of violence and not through agreement with the neighbouring peoples, sowed the seeds of inevitable future conflicts and fratricidal wars. Naturally, the BWP could not support such 'national acquisitions.'

It should be mentioned here that, notwithstanding our vigorous efforts to maintain the best and frankest of relations with the YCP, even in the early period of the anti-fascist struggle, and contrary to our wishes, an alarming misunderstanding sprang up between the two parties. It emerged after Yugoslavia's military debacle and after the establishment of a Bulgarian adminstration and the stationing of Bulgarian garrisons in Vardar Macedonia. Until then the party organization in Macedonia had been headed by the Regional Committee which was subordinated to the CC of the YCP; its secretary from the spring of 1940 was Metodi Shatorov, born in Prilep, a prominent

functionary of the Bulgarian Communist Party and one of the leaders of IMRO (united). He had been promoted to that responsible post at the recommendation of Georgi Dimitrov, who personally knew him and highly valued his political, revolutionary and militant qualities.

It should be said that in April-May, when we were confronted with a new political situation in the Balkans, our Central Comittee was hard put how to act and on what basis to establish its relations with the Regional Committee for Macedonia: all underground channels of communications with the CC of the YCP had been blocked. But as Yugoslavia, routed by the nazi aggressors, passed through trying months of complete disorganization, the links between the Regional Committee for Macedonia and the CC of the YCP also proved disrupted. There upon Metodi Shatorov was compelled to try to get in touch with us.* In the meantime, late in April and early in May 1941, he succeeded in contacting his leadership and obtained its consent to temporarily place the Macedonian organization, until the situation cleared up, under the direction of our Central Committee.

We immediately informed the Bureau in Exile about it in a detailed letter, edited by Traicho Kostov[19] and Anton Ivanov[20] and dated May 10, 1941. Here are its most significant passages:

'We now have links with the Macedonian Regional Committee which, with the consent of the YCP, has passed under our direction....

'We decided: 1. To leave the party organization in former Yugoslav Macedonia as it had been in Yugoslavia,

*Different Yugoslav historians allege that Metodi Shatorov personally went to Sofia right after Yugoslavia's defeat with the intention of 'handing over' the Macedonian party organization to the BWP. This is a trumped-up story. Shatorov arrived in Sofia early in October 1941 after the YCP leadership had made frantic efforts to disown him personally and the Regional Committee headed by him before the communists and the masses in Vardar Macedonia. Prior to that time other messengers of the Regional Committee had come to Sofia, while we, for our part sent in succesion as links several collaborators of the Central Committee, about which I have written in my book 'The Storm'.

i.e. the Party locals in Macedonia to be directly headed by the former Macedonian Committee, which henceforth will work under our guidance and control' (Central Party Archives, f.3, op.4, archive unit 590, sheets 21,22).

Further on in this letter and in another one, dated June 20, 1941, the Central Committee informed the Bureau in Exile about the measures and the work it intended to carry out, so as to involve that organization in the united class-revolutionary and anti-fascist struggle of the Bulgarian Workers' Party. In its answer, the Bureau in Exile recommended that we work out a tactical line and put forward a platform of work among the population in that region, which we would oppose to the bourgeois monarcho-fascist treacherous policy. The Bureau in Exile and Georgi Dimitrov also stressed the necessity of rallying all the sound forces around that platform, worked out by the Party, for a joint struggle against fascism and the nazi invaders.

Proceeding from instructions of the Bureau in Exile and of Georgi Dimitrov personally, our Central Committee elaborated an exact and clear programme for concrete actions in Vardar Macedonia. The main points were as follows:

1. To issue a statement spelling out the BWP position on the national and territorial question in the new situation, around which we would start rallying the sound popular forces in that region (as well as, naturally, in the whole of Bulgaria).

2. To elucidate this position both in the columns of *Rabotnichesko Delo* and at underground Party conferences.

3. To seek close contacts with the population, which resents the war and Bulgaria's transformation into a nazi colony, through the mass organizations of workers, producers and other strata.

4. To oppose to chauvinism and imperialist fragmentation a policy of fraternal solidarity and cooperation

between the Balkan peoples via a declaration signed by the leaderships of all the Balkan communist parties.

5. To denounce, in a special statement, 'Macedonia's liberation' carried out in an imperialist manner, which in practice means a new partitioning of the Macedonian population; to strictly stick to our position that the Macedonian population had the right to determine its destiny by itself in a free, united and indivisible Macedonia.

In our letter we informed the Bureau in Exile about the sentiments of the Macedonian population after the region had been annexed to Bulgaria and pointed out that 'no one there is sorry for former Yugoslavia, but there is universal disappointment at the fragmentation of Macedonia, at the destructions, at the outrages of the new Bulgarian administration and its fascist methods.' The Macedonian population is profoundly convinced, we wrote, that the real liberation of Macedonia is possible only with the help of the USSR.

In the last part of the letter we informed the Bureau in Exile and Georgi Dimitrov about the organizational and mass political undertakings planned by us, which aimed at placing the Macedonian population and the population of the rest of Bulgaria on an equal footing and at involving it in the struggle waged by the Bulgarian people for an improvement of their economic plight, for social and political rights and freedoms, for the rehabilitation of the wartorn Vardar Macedonia, for putting wages on a par with wages in the other parts of Bulgaria, for local self-government, etc.

The struggle for all these demands, we emphasized, would be waged under the slogan of the right to self-determination of the Macedonian population, against the war, against the imperialist partitioning of the peoples, for fraternal cooperation with the peoples of all the Balkan states, welded in close friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union.

And since the CC of the BWP believed that the stand voiced by us was shared in principle by the CC of the YCP, that our Yugoslav comrades had remained loyal to the

stand that the Macedonian issue should be settled after the victory (which was our position as well), we renamed the former Regional Committee of the YCP for Macedonia into Regional Committee of the Workers' Party in Macedonia; we considered this as provisional, until we had elucidated the organizational status of the Party locals in the other annexed lands as well.

Proceeding from this programme and with the consent of the Party's Bureau in Exile and of Georgi Dimitrov personally, the CC of the BWP gradually developed lively interaction with the Party leadership of the Macedonian organization. Our contacts with that leadership and with its secretary Metodi Shatorov continued for several months. In my capacity as organizational secretary of the CC in charge of relations with the Central Committees of the Yugoslav and Greek Communist Parties, I usually sent messengers whom I instructed to Skopje. Among those who made this trip once or several times figured Peter Bogdanov, Yordan Katranjiev, Ivan Georgiev-Dobroudjanetsa, Ivan Maslarov, Todor Prahov and the radio mechanic G. Ouzounov. The messengers coming from there also got in touch with me, informing us about the state of affairs in that region and seeking our help, our advice and instructions. Owing to the hard conditions of terror and the police persecutions launched by the monarcho-fascist administration against the local revolutionary forces, Metody Shatorov could not make a trip to Sofia. And yet our relations developed on a sound, principled Marxist-Leninist basis. We had good reasons to believe that in the near future the regional organization would overcome the explicable temporary difficulties in its party and political activity and, with our most active assistance, would succeed in raising the population to an intransigent armed anti-fascist struggle.

Our surprise was great, however, when in the summer of 1941 (in mid-July, as far as I can recall), two representatives of the Yugoslav Communist Party suddenly showed up in Sofia. They had arrived by the old channel of un-

derground links between the two Party leaderships, which, however, after Yugoslavia's military debacle, temporarily did not function. The rules of conspiracy forbade the use of names, so that I learnt only much later from Yugoslav publications that the first (and more important) of the two was Lazar Kolisevski (I did not succeed in learning the name of the second one).

I was the one who met and talked with them.

Our first and natural reaction as members of the Central Committee was joy at the re-establishment of contacts with the leadership of the fraternal Yugoslav Communist Party. We assumed and expected that the two representatives of the CC of the YCP had arrived in Sofia to strengthen the old ties between the Party leaderships interrupted by the war, to exchange information with us about the situation, about the preparations and course of the armed anti-fascist struggle and, of course, to lay the groundwork of our common concerted struggle against fascism and the nazi invaders in the Balkans.

Unfortunately, we were deceived in our expectations...

Instead of a comradely dialogue, well-meant and inspired by a mutual desire for friendship and unity of action, our first conversation turned into a monologue. It was a rude, accusatory monologue, delivered in a haughty voice. Its author was Kolisevski.

I cannot quote any of our documents, or cite minutes of that conversation (the meeting took place late in the evening, we were walking in the dark streets of Sofia) and therefore I shall only sum up the strange speech.* I come

*The arrival of Lazar Kolisevski in Sofia to establish contact with the CC of the BWP is also confirmed by the letter sent by the then commissioner of the CC of the YCP for Macedonia, Dragan Pavlovic, to his leadership late in August 1941. The letter was published in the collection Извори на ослободителната војна и револуцијата во Македонија 1941-1945. Т. I. Кн. прва. Скопје, 1968, с. 34-37. That same letter also reports about Kolisevski's meeting with the representative of the CC of the BWP, Tsola Dragoycheva.

In September 1941, Dragan Pavlovic, carrying out the directives of his leadership, imposed the removal of Metodi Shatorov from the post of secretary of the Regional Committee and replaced him by Lazar Kolisevski.

on behalf of the CC of the YCP, Kolisevski said, to express our surprise and displeasure at your not yet having staged an armed uprising; this, to put it mildly, is opportunism; by its policy the Bulgarian Party is actually on a par with the policy of the monarcho-fascist regime; takes us as example; correct your political line at once; rise in an armed popular uprising without further delay...

Finally, 'having got to the bottom of things', as regards the 'erroneous opportunist policy' of the Bulgarian Workers' Party, Kolisevski insistently demanded to meet not just one member of the Politburo, but the whole of the central leadership....

As can be expected, we parted cooly, agreeing to meet again in a day or two. I reported to Traicho Kostov and Anton Ivanov about the substance and the results of the first talk with the Yugoslav representatives. Both were of the opinion that, in view of the unbecoming attitude towards the BWP, their meeting with Kolisevski and the other comrade accompanying him was undesirable.They entrusted me with transmitting our answer together with a protest against their inadmissible conduct: in spite of all our respect for the YCP, which headed the armed anti-fascist struggle of theYugoslav peoples, relations between the two parties had to be based unconditionally, as heretofore, on mutual respect and non-interference.

I did as I was instructed.

Our protest, however, made no impression on Kolisevski. Arrogant and openly disregardful of the Bulgarian Workers' Party, he cut me short:

'It is obvious why you are behaving in this way! You are incorrigible opportunists! And it seems, moreover, that that old Bulgarian Sharlo, a traitor, enemy and saboteur, has worked you up against us...'

And he immediately added, 'small wonder that precisely in your person he has found his patrons and inspirers...'

I was shocked and hurt to the quick. All the more so as it became clear that the torrent of accusations, slanders and insults was now aimed at Metodi Shatorov. Thus in one go

'that old Bulgarian – traitor, enemy and saboteur' was put in the same boat with 'the die-hard Bulgarian opportunists'....

But Kolisevski did not stop short. Along with the accusations and attacks levelled at Shatorov, he all of a sudden and ever so caustically and rudely attacked the CC of the Bulgarian Workers' Party, accusing it of 'illegally appropriating the prerogatives of leadersip over the Macedonian regional organization'. And he added: 'the self-same Sharlo has obviously played a dirty role in that scheme...'

I objected, trying to find an appropriate reasonable tone both against the accusations hurled at our Central Committee and against the attacks aimed at Shatorov. I tried to be calm, businesslike, well argumented. I stated that we had established contact with and had taken over leadership of the Macedonian regional organization because after Yugoslavia's occupation it had remained cut off from the centre and by virtue of an agreement with the Yugoslav Central Committee.

'No, ' Kolisevski rudely interrupted me. 'Sharlo has acted on his own. And he has taken advantage of the situation in order to accomplish his counter-revolutionary and treacherous designs...'

I again tried to argue, but Kolisevski hardly let me say a word. Instead, he put the ultimatum that we discontinue 'any direct contacts' with the Macedonian party organization; that we lend a hand to the CC of the YCP 'in disowning Sharlo and exposing him among the Macedonian communists'. What is more, in the end he insisted that we assist in 'sending Sharlo' to the interior of Yugoslavia'to be tried for his treason....'

We parted on cool terms. When I informed Traicho and Anton Ivanov about all this, both of them – profoundly and sincerely indignant – considered my further meetings with the two missionaries inadvisable and decided that under the circumstances a meeting of the Politburo with them was quite out of the question. And not just because the accusations levelled at our Party were profoundly unjustified.

The atmosphere further deteriorated as a result of the scandalous conduct of Kolisevski, entirely lacking the obligatory qualities of a level-headed and well-intentioned communist, showing the necessary respect for his partners. I informed Kolisevski (the second person was actually no more than an observer) about the stand of our Central Committee, stating that the demanded meeting could only take place after a careful study of all accusations. Whereupon the two of them departed.

The two of them left, but the concern – deep-rooted and acute – remained and grew even stronger: we were unable to comprehend how the CC of the YCP could permit itself to claim the inadmissible right to hand out arbitrary appraisals and to pass irresponsible verdicts over one or another communist party, at that accompanied by hostile attacks, groundless accusations, slanders and insults? Nor could we understand whereby we had deserved the brutish disrespect for the BWP exhibited by Kolisevski. We were also confused by the sharp stand of the YCP, admitting of no arguments of objections, as regards the leadership of Vardar Macedonia. Finally, we were shocked by the poisonous and heavy accusations levelled at Metodi Shatorov. How on earth had he earned them, as we all knew and highly valued him as a finely trained, experienced and steeled communist-internationalist, who had shown his mettle during decades of class battles in Bulgaria, in Spain and in France? What is more, we had been informed that Shatorov enjoyed the recognition and excellent references of the Comintern and of Georgi Dimitrov personally, at whose recommendation he had been sent to assume the leadership of the Regional Organization in Macedonia. Was it possible for such a leader to behave like a 'traitor, enemy and saboteur'? What could possibly be the specific reasons for accusing him of 'counter-revolutionary' actions? And finally, was it possible to assume that a functionary of such stature, educated in Dimitrov's militant school, used to running for years the deadly risks of the struggle, capable of taking full responsibility for his words and actions, would not, at such a

crucial moment for the fate of the Balkan peoples and of the Macedonian population,all of a sudden mislead our Central Committee, resorting to untruths?*

In the meantime, guided by the idea of friendship, understanding and interaction in the name of the common goals and confident that the YCP continued to hold the view of settling the Macedonian issue after the victory, we were ready to immediately re-establish the old state of affairs. All the more so now, when Kolisevski denied that the CC of the YCP had given leave to the Regional Committee for Macedonia to establish organizational and political ties with the BWP and to pass over under its leadership.

When in August we received the Comintern decision on the questionof the Party leadership of Vardar Macedonia, we accepted it without any obstructions. We were later to learn that that decision had been taken under the tremendous pressure and on the categorical insistence of the CC of the YCP. The decision came to us as a radiogram,

*The situation at the time was such that Metodi Shatorov was not in a position to prove the initial agreement of the CC of the YCP about the passage of the Macedonian regional organization under the leadership of our Central Committee until matters cleared up. When he came to work with us in the autumn of 1941 he, as behooves a true communist, accepted the criticism and himself analyzed most frankly his political mistake. Leaving aside the outright slanderous allegation about his having shown 'defeatism and treason', etc., Shatorov's mistake boiled down almost solely to the slogan raised by the Regional Committee headed by him immediately after Yugoslavia's military defeat,calling for the establishment of 'Soviet Macedonia'. Obviously this slogan was unfeasible and untimely, which, by the way, was soon realized by Shatorov himself and by the whole committee there, and the slogan was shelved. But the 'mistakes and crimes', of which he was accused by Kolisevski (later by Tempo and others), as well as the trenchant accusations of an 'arbitrary linking-up with the CC of the BWP', were not admitted by Shatorov and we, too, found them quite unjust and untenable.

Unfortunately in our days Tempo, Kolisevski and a number of other Yugoslav authors do not stop throwing mud on the face of that magnificent fighter and internationalist. Metodi Shatorov is no langer among us to put those self-appointed accusers down a peg or two: on the very eve of September 9, 1944, he fell, arms in hand, crowning his glorious militant path with a glorious heroic death in the name of the people's freedom and happiness, in the name of the communist ideas.

transmitted via the underground Party radio station of the Central Committee. And guided by the best of intentions, we immediately sent by a special messenger a copy of the decision to the Macedonian Regional Committee for information and fulfilment. (As to the CC of the YCP, they learnt about this document much later – in mid-September, as contacts between Belgrade and Moscow, as well as all other links of the Yugoslav Party leadership had been temporarily disrupted.)

Here is the text of the document:

'Macedonia is to be attached to Yugoslavia *for practical reasons and for the sake of expediency*. The main struggle is now against the German and Italian invaders and their agents. *The main form of struggle is now the partisan movement*. This movement is now developing on Yugoslav soil and under the leadership of Yugoslavia. Serbian Macedonia should become one of the bases of that movement, which is to disorganize the rear of Germany and Italy in the Balkans.

'In view of the military situation in Macedonia, the closest of cooperation should be established between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, particularly locally.

'Bulgaria should ... lend all-round assistance to Yugoslavia and the two parties *should take up the stand of the self-determination of the Macedonian people*.

'Efforts are called for to ensure cooperation between the Bulgarian and the Yugoslav peoples against the common enemy.'

Almost simultaneously with the messenger going to Skopje to deliver there a copy of the Comintern radiogram, a second courier left for Belgrade: he carried a letter from our CC to the CC of the YCP in connection with the above decision.

The letter read:

'1. We unreservedly agree with the decision of the Communist International. We suggest to the Macedonian comrades prompt establishment of relations in

Yugoslavia, unconditional abidance by the decision and its energetic implementation under Yugoslavia's direction.

'2. For contacts with Yugoslavia and for coordinating the work in Macedonia we propose our representative in RCM (Regional Committee of Macedonia).

'3. We are sending a special person, for whom we shall draw up written instructions, to elucidate thoroughly and cope more easily with the abnormal situation.

'4. We accept Yugoslavia's line explained in the letter addressed to us.

'At the same time we have the following comments:

'a) The decision on a link-up with the Macedonian Communist Party was taken without expressly informing Yugoslavia's representative and guided by practical considerations.

'b) We agree that Comrade 'The Old Man' (Metodi Shatorov) made gross political and organizational mistakes... for which we censure him... But familiar with his dedicated work in Bulgaria, we consider that his characterization as a class enemy and counter-revolutionary ellement is fa-fetched.

'We insist that his punishment be mitigated.* We wish the reorganization to be effected with the utmost order and without discord, to which we too shall contribute.

'Accept our fraternal greetings for your splendid struggle and best wishes for success.

CC of the BWP'

I suppose that now, having read the text of our letter, the reader has been impressed by our rather firm tone as

* The verdict passed on Shatorov in absentia, based on grossly exaggerated mistakes and their ill-intentioned interpretation, was death by a firing squad (Author's note)

regards the punishment of The Old Man. To shed further light on matters, however, I should add that our letter was sent via our channel as early as mid-August, i.e. about a week after we had received the radiogram from the Comintern. We therefore had neither the time nor the opportunity of studying through our own channels, without Kolisevski's dubious mediation, the actual facts regarding Shatorov's 'flagrant political and organizational mistakes',nor had we seen him. Therefore, although having accepted – on trust – the accusations levelled at Shatorov, we insisted on a lighter punishment while reserving the right to study the matter carefully at a later date.

Relations between the leaderships of the two communist parties continued in the autumn of 1941. Important letters were exchanged via an underground channel. Traicho Kostov brought them to my knowledge, when in December 1941, after several months in St Nicholas women's concentration camp, I escaped and returned to Sofia.

The first one, dated September 6, 1941, was a letter from the CC of the YCP (signed by J.B.Tito) to our Central Committee: it dwelt on the problem of the party and political leadership of Vardar Macedonia, associating it with Metodi Shatorov-Sharlo's counter-revolutionary and anti-party activity'.

It is superfluous to reproduce its contents – it goes beyond the framework of my story. However, I am in duty bound to note: the Politburo understood that it was not so much Metodi Shatorov's mistakes that were the reason for the conflict; these mistakes were rather an opportune occasion for attacks, planned with a long-range target, against our Communist Party. Both in the letter and in the personal talks with Kolisevski, Shatorov's mistakes were deliberately explained by our 'patronage and inspiration', so that implicitly the shaft of accusations was aimed at the whole strategy and tactics of the Bulgarian Workers' Party....

These accusations made up the second part of the letter.

Ill-informed about the objective situation in our country, the YCP leaders insisted that *we immediately raise the people to an armed uprising:* as arguments they advanced the appeal and the directives of the Comintern executive Committee, addressed to all communist parties in Europe after the nazi invasion of the land of the Soviets.

As it will subsequently become clear from our answer, neither at that time nor later did the CC of the YCP care to make a calm, painstaking and well-meaning analysis of the political situation in Bulgaria (and, separately, in the region of Macedonia), to form an exact idea of the conditions prevailing in our country and to properly appraise the policy of uncompromising armed anti-fascist struggle[21] proclaimed by the Bulgarian Workers' Party. This policy was in perfect consonance with the Comintern directives and appeals and at the same time stemmed from the Bulgarian communists' well realized sense of their patriotic and internationalist duty.

This would, of course, have been at their own expense and would not have given rise to undue alarm, had it not been of a nature to poison our normal relationship and to impede the political and militant cooperation between the two communist parties so indispensable in those years. This was the root of our anguish and that is why our Central Committee was doing and would have done everything possible, showing complete readiness for compromise on a principled basis, so as to bolster mutual respect and strengthen trust between the two party leaderships, without which the two peoples' struggle against their common enemy – fascism and the nazi invaders would have been inconceivable.

This invariable endeavour accompanied by good will and sincere respect also found an expression in the letter of reply addressed by our Central Committee to the YCP leadership in October 1941. Further down I shall quote its most essential passages to let the reader form his own opinion. That letter completely refuted the utterly groundless (intrinsically slanderous) accusations levelled at our Party;

at the same time the careful reader will note that our Central Committee expressed disagreement with the attempts (although veiled at that time) of the YCP to revise the common conception on the Macedonian issue coordinated between the Balkan revolutionary movements and to pave the way for its unilateral, nationalistic settlement.*

At the beginning of its letter our Central Committee categorically rejected the reproach that the BWP had allegedly 'arbitrarily appropriated the prerogatives of the YCP' over the leadership of the Macedonian party organization. After that our concurrence with the Comintern decision on this question was reiterated.

Further on the CC of the BWP gave expression to the sincere admiration with which the Bulgarian communists were following the heroic struggle waged by the peoples of Yugoslavia against the nazi invaders.

'The policy which you have launched and pursue in conformity with the Communist International,' the letter reads, 'is, in our opinion, correct.'

But already in that part of the letter the attention of the CC of the YCP was drawn to the erroneous identification of the political situation in the two neighbouring countries:

> 'Among other things, we consider that it would be wrong to put a sign of equality between the situation in Yugoslavia and the situation in Bulgaria, as you are doing in your letter.
>
> 'We even doubt that it would be correct to completely identify the situation in Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and in other Yugoslav lands with that in Macedonia.'

* The two letters I am referring to were destroyed during the air raids of Sofia in 1944, together with other valuable documents of the confidential archives of the CC. The text quoted here has therefore been borrowed from the Yugoslav historical publication

Сборник докумената и података о народноослободилачком рату југословенских народа. Т. 7. Кн. I Београд, 1952.

Here is how our Central Committee backed with arguments those assessments:

'After the capitulaion of Yugoslavia, a situation essentially differing from that in Bulgaria was established. Whereas in Yugoslavia the military apparatus was destroyed and the old state apparatus was completely disrupted and annihilated, while the new state apparatus now being created under German tutelage in Serbia and even in Croatia is weak and discredited, has absolutely no support nor does not enjoy the confidence of the popular masses, in Bulgaria the old state apparatus not only continues to exist, but, to a certain degree, is gaining in strength thanks to direct German buttressing. Whereas Yugoslavia was routed in the war, whereas it lost its national independence and the nazi bandits were completely unmasked in the eyes of the Yugoslav peoples as enslavers and bloody assassins, ... Bulgaria has not yet officially been involved in the war... Germany formally treats Bulgaria as an 'ally', to which it even lends a helping hand in expanding its territory. Although Bulgaria itself is subjected by the German fascists to ruthless exploitation and spoliation, still the methods of that spoliation are somewhat different from those employed in the occupied parts of Yugoslavia. This offers much greater latitude for demagogy and deception of the masses to the Bulgarian bourgeoisie, posing as a 'champion of peace', as the realizer of the Bulgarian 'national ideals' with the help of Germany...

'Whereas in Yugoslavia the people's normal way of life has been forcibly disrupted by the war and the occupation, and conditions are being created for mass armament and for an armed uprising, in our country this process has not yet gone that far; the arms are exclusively in the hands of our enemies and the conditions for arming the masses are exceedingly hard...'

And further on:

'Contrary to the situation in Yugoslavia, in our country we are still up against heavy odds in our efforts to organize the masses and to lead them in a resolute armed struggle against the fascist occupiers and their Bulgarian flunkeys.

'It would, therefore, obviously be wrong and precipitate at the present moment to set our tasks just as in Yugoslavia. An armed uprising now and in the nearest future cannot be massive and would easily be crushed by the organized forces of the as yet unimpaired police and military apparatus of the Bulgarian state (and still more easily with the cooperation of the German military forces stationed in Bulgaria) and it therefore would not be in a position to render any effective assistance to the struggle of the Red Army... While working actively to prepare an armed uprising against the fascist occupiers and their stooges, the conditions for which in Bulgaria, too, will come to a head, *we are now currently rendering no small assistance to the Red Army* by disorganizing the German rear in our country by way of sabotages and diversion.

. . .

The Party and the people have shown heroism and have made considerable sacrifices: thousands of communists are in concentration camps, a number of comrades have been murdered and the court martials are constantly passing death sentences on workers and peasants.

*'As far as Macedonia is concerned... we, all the same, consider it necessary to draw your attention to the fact that there too, the situation cannot be entirely indentified with the situation in Serbia or even in Croatia. It should not be forgotten that within the boundaries of Yugoslavia the Macedonians were the people most oppressed and most wronged by pan-Serbian chauvinism and this has left particularly*

*deep traces in them. They feel a certain aversion towards former Yugoslavia...*

'There are places in Macedonia (Koumanovo, part of Skopje), whose population is ready for active struggle... But in the remaining part of Macedonia, the population is not yet ready for a stubborn struggle and the task there is to prepare it well in advance for fighting through mass political propaganda and battles in defence of the immediate political and economic interests of the Macedonian population,... as well as to gradually involve it in a stubborn struggle by way of sabotage and diversive actions. In the process of that struggle conditions will mature for a broad armed activity. This should now be the task of individual combat groups (chetas). An indiscriminate struggle against the Bulgarian soldiers in the present situation risks not to find sufficient support among the masses, to remain hanging in the air and thus to isolate the Party from the masses...

*'At the same time we consider that in order to clear the way for work of the YCP among the Macedonian population and to more quickly win its confidence in the policy pursued so far by the YCP, it should in no uncertain terms condemn the oppressive nationalistic policy pursued before towards the Macedonian people by the pan-Serbian chauvinists as well as the erroneous solution of the agrarian question in Macedonia, and should recognize the right of the Macedonian people to self-determination. Along with this fundamental point, as our own experience has shown, it may be expedient to grant autonomous rights to the Macedonian organization (while you would retain general political control over it), which in its activities would act on its own behalf and on its own initiative, emphasizing that it was working in close contact and in full agreement with the fraternal YCP and BWP.* You will thus help the Macedonian population to quickly rid itself of the engendered dis-

trust of the Serbian people and of Yugoslavia, which has been instilled in it earlier by the oppressive policy of the pan-Serbian chauvinists.

'This is how we assess the situation in Macedonia... One thing, at any rate, is indisputable for us: *that the situation in Macedonia should be appraised and the tasks of our (joint work) should be set not proceeding from the situation in the other Yugoslav lands, without taking into consideration the specificity of the Macedonian conditions, but in connection with a concrete study of the conditions and the situation in Macedonia itself.*'

Winding up the letter, after settling some practical problems pertaining to the relations between the two communist parties, the CC of the BWP expressed the desire that these relations develop in the future, too – a condition for strengthening the militant friendship of the two peoples and for unfolding their joint anti-fascist struggle. Our Central Committee sent as its representative Boyan Bulgaranov to the Regional Committee for Macedonia to establish contac and exchange information with the CC of the YCP; he was also assigned the task of helping to coordinate the armed struggle between the anti-fascist movements in Bulgaria, Yugoslavia (Eastern Serbia) and the Macedonian region.

This, then, was the content of our answer and the reader has probably already formed an opinion about how matters stood. As is apparent from the text, our Central Committee had good reasons to consider that its policy of armed struggle was the only correct one in view of the objective situation in the country and, in conformity with this, firmly rejected the attempts of the YCP to revise it as inappropriate and unwarranted.

At the same time the CC of the BWP proposed to the CC of the YCP calmly, in a duly respectful tone but sufficiently clearly and unambiguously, to recognize *the right of the Macedonian population to self-determinaton.* In this

connection and on this basis we also wanted the autonomy of the Macedonian party organization to be recognized, which should work in close contact and in full agreement with the YCP as well as with the Bulgarian Workers' Party. This was something which proceeded from the spirit of the above quoted Comintern decision of August 1941.

I lay emphasis on this, as it was an expression of *our invariable and consistent internationalist position on the question of the future political destiny of that important old Bulgarian region in the centre of the Balkan Peninsula.*

On my return to Sofia the Politburo again entrusted me with my old duties of maintaining ties and contacts with the central committees of the Yugoslav and Greek Communist Parties. The letters reports, which Boyan Bulgaranov sent to the CC of the BWP were therefore addressed to me and it is again through me that our directives, instructions and tasks, connected with the necessity of consolidating and stepping up the joint armed struggle between the anti-fascist movements in Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Greece, were forwarded to him. The representatives of the CC of the YCP (on several occasions men, but also women) occasionally sent to Sofia, as well as of the Macedonian communist organization*, had meetings with me, meetings which continued, though irregularly, up to the very eve of September 9, 1944.

*Usually the messengers came along the channel whose final point in Sofia were the lodgings of Filomena and Venko Markovski, on 160 Slivnitsa Blvd.: on several occasions they were also accompanied by Anna Bulgaranova, who commuted mainly between Sofia and Skopje, as well as by other trusted people of ours.

As to the women massengers from Belgrade or Skopje, it is only now, while preparing my memoirs, that I learnt the name of one of them: Nada Bogdanova. She tells about her underground trips to Sofia and about her meetings with me in September 1943 in her letter published in the collection Жените на Македонија во НОВ. Скопје, 1976.

It is to be deeply regretted that she, too, following the false tune of Tempo, has joined the undignified slanderous campaign against our Party and our people, distorting our actual position on important problems of the joint anti-fascist struggle waged by our two peoples.

All this enabled me to follow in detail the development of relations with all the Balkan communist parties and to participate in this process. I was also able to keep tabs on relations with the CC of the YCP, as well as with the Macedonian party organization, placed under its unilateral control. Let me say right away that our stand (as spelled out in the letter of October 1941) on the necessity of an autonomous Macedonian party organization as well as our demand that it should work in close contact and in complete harmony both with the YCP and the BWP, were set aside: the answer, as expressed in immediate practical actions and unilateral imposition of its own stand, was an unceremonious refusal.

It is true that Boyan Bulgaranov, who had established his conspiratorial refuge in the region of Skopje, conscientiously fulfilled the mission entrusted to him. But for the sake of truth it must be stated that most of the new leaders of the Macedonian party organization, who came to replace the committee headed by Metodi Shatorov – first Lazar Kolisevski, followed in 1942 by D Radoslavlevič and frøm February 1943 by Svetozar Vukmanovic-Tempo (sent out as a permanent representative of the CC of the YCP and the Supreme General Staff of the People's Liberation Army for Macedonia) – crassly restricted his freedom of action, treated him as an unequal partner and actually turned him into an observer, a consultant and almost a recorder of the developments; unfortunately he was prevented from carrying out the tasks set to him of activating relations and unfolding our joint struggle with the anti-fascist movement in Macedonia in the scope desired by us.

What is more, during most of his stay in Vardar Macedonia (October 1941 – March 1944), he encountered the systematic obstructions and unconcealed counteraction of Tempo and of M. Apostolski, the military head of Vardar Macedonia; these two and Tempo in particular played an extremely unsavory role, making incredible efforts to poison relations between the two fraternal parties

and movements, as well as to fan anti-Bulgarian sentiments among the communists in Macedonia.

From the letters which Bulgaranov sent to the Central Committee we learnt about Tempo's dishonourable role, about his ceaseless provocations and insults addressed to the Bulgarian Workers' Party (entirely in the spirit of those first voiced by Lazar Kolisevski to me), about his systematic statements permeated by a spiteful anti-Bulgarian spirit, about his attempts to smear and slander the Party's militant policy and to play down the scale of our armed struggle. At first we were flabbergasted: was it possible that the delegate of the CC of the YCP should be so ill-informed about the actual state of affairs in Bulgaria? Was it possible that he should ignore the real nature of the positions taken by the BWP, to allow himself to qualify them as 'defeatist' and 'opportunist'? And on whose behalf, we asked ourselves, dared he shower reproaches, insults and slanders, falsifying the truth and distorting the real facts? Was this the unchanged position of the CC of the YCP or just a matter of his own wrong and harmful appraisals? Patiently explaining the tactics of our anti-fascist movement, Bulgaranov pointed out that the BWP was strictly taking into consideration the objective possibilities and directing the struggle with a view to the concrete conditions prevailing in Bulgaria; he added that we were launching the resistance struggle on three fronts simultaneously: a) the economic struggle of the working class and the toiling peasants; b) the political struggle to rally all sound national forces under a single banner, and c) the partisan and other armed operations in town and village against Bulgarian monarcho-fascism and the German aggressors. What is more, Bulgaranov specified, without underestimating the other forms of struggle, we laid stress precisely on the armed anti-fascist struggle.

To these explanations Tempo would object: 'How long will you keep philosophizing! Don't you understand that the centre of the struggle is not in the towns but in the mountains! That's where you should set up partisan forces,

only they can rout the enemy and liberate the towns!... Stop copying the experience of the Russian Revolution...'

Although all this was far from being a reasonable and well meant dialogue, Bulgaranov again attempted to explain the party and political line of the BWP; he declared (as we had explicitly instructed him to do) that we stood in no need of outside suggestions in order to elaborate and direct it, that what we insisted on was equality, recognition and mutual respect between the two parties – the basis on which we were ready to consolidate militant cooperation with the YCP and the other Balkan anti-fascist movements.

To this protest Tempo answered: 'Under such conditions, the possibilities for cooperation between the YCP and the BWP are limited....'

(It should be mentioned that when reading Bulgaranov's letters, we members of the Politburo were deeply shocked. What did all this actually mean? On whose behalf did Tempo dare indulge in assessments and provocations, condemn, exercise tutelage and instruct our Party? He could not help being aware that, as an official YCP representative, he was committing his Central Committee by his statements, and consequently we would interpret this as the attitude of the Yugoslav party leadership towards us. In spite of all our respect and admiration for the YCP, which had succeeded in raising the people to a heroic anti-fascist struggle, we could not permit it or, for that matter, any other party to pass peremptory verdicts, to accuse and instruct, nor would we forego our right to make our own choice of the ways, means and forms of our liberation.

Nothing, absolutely nothing justified the YCP in behaving so haughtily and disrespectfully towards us. We were an old revolutionary Marxist Party (older than the YCP), steeled in decades of fierce class battles! We had been among the first parties co-founders of the Third Leninist Communist International! Lenin had given a very high evaluation of the BCP, pointing it out as example of the party closest to the Bolshevik Party in ideological

schooling, revolutionary adherence to principle and militant spirit! Our Party had boldly followed the example of the Bolsheviks and alone in Europe had prepared for and staged an anti-fascist armed uprising in September 1923! In spite of the severe rout and the countless casualties, the BCP had not knuckled under; on the contrary, in the following decades it unfurled with redoubled energy the banner of intransigent struggle against capitalist exploitation and monarcho-fascist terror!

On what grounds, we also asked ourselves then, did Tempo (or the Yugoslav leadership) dare force on others their own appraisals, their own example and expreience, their own political line? What was the cause of the flagrant underestimation of the experience of the Russian Revolution and of extolling their own experience? Was not the heroic exploit of the Bolsheviks, who has scored a brilliant victory of world historic significance in October 1917, a great acquisition for all parties and revolutionary movements inspired by the communsit ideal? We clearly realized that the cause of the October Revolution was for all communists in the world a great militant and political school, an inexhaustible treasuresotre of experience, on which we could amply draw and from which we could creatively learn how to triumph in our own countries. What justified Tempo in demonstrating such a crass neglect of the glorious experience and the impressive October triumph of the Bolsheviks?

Questions, to which we were then unable to find a satisfactory answer...)

But Svetozar Vukmanovic-Tempo did not confine himself to attempts to smear and discredit our Party. In his controversies with Boyan Bulgaranov he systematically tried to separate, to estrange and even to oppose the communists in Macedonia to the Bulgarian Workers' Party. A particularly striking case in point was the conference of the Macedonian communist organization held in Foushtani (a village in North Greece) in the summer of 1943.

Bulgaranov informed us about this case in good time. The hall, in which the conference held its sessions, had been decorated with slogans and messages of greetings addressed to all the Balkan communist parties. To all but the Bulgarian one.... Bulgaranov immediately informed Tempo about this, assuming that it was a matter of a carking ommission. He soon learnt better. Hearing Bulgaranov's protest, Tempo brazenly declared:'No, we did not put up a message of greetings to the Bulgarian Party, because there is no paper...'

Obviously this was yet another manifestation of a flagrant disregard and disrespect for the Bulgarian Workers' Party. Within the context of that manifestation we perceived an ill-concealed nationalism, derected at a premeditated target.

In the meantime, against the background of Tempo's disloyal and provocative attitude towards the BWP, in the summer of 1943 our Central Committee was suddenly taken aback by an unexpected and strange idea. Coming from Tempo, it envisaged the setting up of a Balkan general staff to coordinate and lead the liberation movements in Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Greece and Albania. We were informed about this by Boyan Bulgaranov in his regular letter. His first report was rather vague – probably the idea had not yet jelled in the thoughts of its authors. And while we in the Politburo were wondering what Bulgaranov was actually writing about, very soon (late in July) a new letter arrived from him. This time it was concrete and to the point. What's more, the letter was accompanied by a copy of a resolution adopted by a 'conference of representatives of the Supreme General Staff of NOV and the partisan detachements of Yugoslavia, of the General Staff of ELAS[22] and of the General Staff of the Liberation Army of the Partisan Volunteers in Albania', held somewhere in the Albanian mountains and of which we had no inkling.

It was precisely that conference, convened late in June, which had taken the decision to form the above General

Staff to coordinate the military and political leadership of the anti-fascist movements in the Balkan states. Bulgaranov added that it was to include representatives of four parties – the Yugoslav, Bulgarian, Greek and Albanian, and that it had been decided that it was to establish 'its temporary seat' in the region of Kostour (Aegean Macedonia). The conference had even fixed the date when the Balkan General Staff was to officially assume its functions: August 10, 1943.

The enclosed resolution further specified: the Balkan General Staff was to consist of special representatives-delegates of the central committees of the communist parties and of the supreme general staffs of the Balkan anti-fascist movements; it was to be a military and political centre of the Balkan anti-fascist movements; while fulfilling its millitary and political tasks, the staff was to enjoy unlimited powers; along with its military and political tasks of coordinating and heading the armed struggle, it was to pave the way for the formation of a future confederation in the Balkans. (I am reproducing this resolution from memory in its essential components. I cannot quote it verbatim, as this document could not be found in the BCP archives; it was probably destroyed, along with many other documents, during the air raids over Sofia.)

Such was that strange idea, advanced by the representative of the YCP in June 1943.

I must confess, we were quite nonplussed. To begin with, the nature and character of the very idea bewildered us: how had it sprung up so hurriedly, unexpectedly and precipitately? Second: why had not the CC of the YCP (on whose behalf Tempo was acting) approached in time our Central Committee on that matter for an opinion and consultation? No one had even asked for our assent in principle to the establishment of such a general staff. Third: what pressing urgency called for the formation of such a leading centre – supra-party and supra-national, at that, invested with such broad powers? Had not the central committees and the military and party staffs of the anti-fascist

movements in the four countries proved their ability to lead the political and armed struggle of their peoples? Fourth: what grounds had Tempo to call such supra-party 'conferences' and what right had he to face the other Balkan communist parties with a fait accompli?

In spite of the patent violation of the generally accepted norms of inter-party relations, we decided (for the sake of anti-fascist unity) to judge matters in substance. The Politburo devoted a special session to the question.. After all-round and careful deliberation a decision was taken. It was explained in a special letter of the Politburo to Boyan Bulgaranov, written and sent by myself. Here is its content*:

'Comrade, we familiarized ourselves with the resolution taken at your June conference.

'From the decisions taken there we are not yet clear about the purpose and the functions of that general staff.

'We request you to answer to several questions at your earliest, so that we may be clear about the character of that organ, as well as about the tasks that we are to entrust our delegate with.

'1. What kind of general staff will it be? A general Balkan one, which means a staff comprising at least Yugoslavia, Greece, Bulgaria and Albania (without Turkey and Romania), or one only for the regions comprising Macedonians from the Yugoslav, Greek and Bulgarian parts of Macedonia as well as Albania, which also has minorities in Yugoslavia and Greece?

'How specifically will that "military and political centre" coordinate its activities with the central committees of the respective parties; how should the expression "unlimited powers" be construed? Is there not a danger of such a body, entrusted with "military and

*A copy of the original of that letter, written in longhand by me, was recently discovered by chance in the Central Party Archives, where it is kept under the signature f.77, op.1, archive unit 7.

political" tasks and invested with "unlimited powers", no matter whether it be all-Balkan or Macedonian-Albanian, taking over, to a certain extent, the functions of the central committees? And if the delegates are under the direct control of the central committees, how concretely will this take place? (It is not a matter of the technical aspect).

'What role is assigned to our delegate in that general staff?

'2. How should we understand the question about "a future confederation", for which "the way was to be paved" already?

II

'Our opinion on the above question is:

'1. If this general staff is to deal with the regions of the Balkans, which encompass Albania and Macedonia, once conquered by Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria, and now by Bulgaria, Germany and Italy, where there are many nationalities and which are referred to in the second half of the resolution, we unreservedly agree to give to our delegate broad powers to coordinate the operations in these regions when determining the strategical and tactical tasks of the national liberation movement.

'We assume, of course, that the political control will be exercised by the Macedonian CC, respectively by the Yugoslav CC.

'2. The question of the future form of relations between the Balkan peoples and states is not a question which can and should be set now. After the war the liberated peoples will have their say on that matter.

'3. If what is meant is an all-Balkan body established between the parties of Yugoslavia, Greece, Albania and Bulgaria, we are of the opinion that this body should not have a leading operative function, but only an informative one, i.e. it should serve as channel

for the mutual exchange of experience, and for the maintenance of lively relations between the fraternal party leaderships, so as to enable them to mutually help each other in the joint struggle against the common enemy. In that case these Party delegates should not have unlimited powers and tackle military and political questions and tasks, but should only have the right to establish relations, maintain contacts and information on how the party represented by them feels about certain questions and how it acts.

'A military and political general staff enjoying unlimited powers would, in our view, mean a taking over of the leading role of the parties' central committees in the different countries. In that case the military and political centre would rather be a central committee, a bureau of all the Balkan communist parties, which will have leading functions not only in the military, but also in the political sphere, because the military operations are determined by the political tasks which a certain party in a given country has set itself. In the present Balkan situation this is unnecessary and even harmful.

'September 1943.'

The answer of our Central Committee re the idea to form an all-Balkan military and revolutionary centre was, as the reader can see, in the negative: we considered this idea unnecessary, inappropriate and even harmful. Naturally, as heretofore, we firmly were set on strengthening relations between the central committees and on developing to the utmost the militant and political ties with the YCP and the other Balkan revolutionary movements; we had already established an efficient system for this purpose. But the transfer of the rights and responsibilities of the central committees (and of the insurgents' leaderships) in the Balkan states to a single, common, supra-party and supra-national leading military and political general staff was extremely dangerous and inad-

missible. In practice this would have implied an unprecedented and inadmissible renunciation of the sacred rights and sacred responsibilities which every communist party bore before its working class and its own people. This was something we could never, under any conditions, countenance!

This initiative also gave rise to the alarm that no account had been taken of the opinion of the Soviet Union and of its role in so important an undertaking. What could actually be the reason for keeping the Bolshevik Party and the Soviet Union away from such a design?

What is more, the idea which Tempo had tried to thrust upon us, had yet another, rather dubious meaning for us: we already had sufficient reason to suspect that behind the ostensible intentions of 'coordination and leadership' of the common anti-fascist struggle 'for the sake of its effective results', the CC of the YCP was striving for the leading role, in other words, for hegemony over the revolutionary and anti-fascist movements in the Balkans. Something, which it seemingly hoped to impose by taking advantage of a political situation tending to favour it. And this hegemony might enable it 'to pave the way' for a future 'confederation of the Balkans' in a manner which tomorrow, after the victory, would allow it, from a position of strength, to remodel and restructure nationally and politically that part of Europe according to its own ideas, interests and conceptions....

The refusal of our Central Committee to cooperate in that suspicious undertaking was final, and that was that. I ignore exactly how the leaderships of the other Balkan parties reacted to that initiative, but most probably their appraisal closely resembled ours. Because, as a matter of fact, this idea died prematurely right after its birth; the abovementioned 'conference', convened by Tempo in the Albanian mountains, did not reconvene, and the Balkan general staff never took shape. Thus the YCP was compelled to continue basing its relations with the BWP and the other

Balkan communist parties on the generally accepted principles.*

Tempo's obnoxious role, however, unfortunately did not end with the idea of a Balkan General Staff. On the contrary: in the subsequent period and until V-Day he continued with the same persistence to fan distrust between the leaderships of the two parties and thus to impede the consolidation of relations and to hold back the all-round development of political and militant cooperation between the BWP and the YCP.

*As I was preparing my memoirs, there appeared in the pages of the *Nova Makedonia* (Skopje, September 1976) the memoirs of Strahil Gigov, a functionary of the Macedonian party organization during the resistance period. In one of the supplements, the author reproduced the history of that still-born idea of a Balkan General Staff. As we read there, the idea was approved by the Supreme General Staff of the Yugoslav People's Liberation Movement (it probably may have been suggested by it) and Tempo made diabolical efforts to realize it. But he encountered 'the inexplicable obstructions' of the BWP. That part delayed its answer, the author writes, without, however, explaining the obvious, i.e., that this might have been an expression of reservations or disagreement. 'Tempo was annoyed by that attitude of the CC of the BWP,' the author continues, 'he kept sending instructions to Skopje via all existing channels and links, insisting that the Bulgarian delegate (B.Bulgaranov) leave as soon as possible, because they were waiting only for him. He wrote that precious time was being lost and that that was a disgrace on the part of the Bulgarians....' The author then alleges that'the Bulgarians continued to keep silent, giving no answer,either "for" or "against" the suggestion.''And yet Gigov concludes: 'For all these reasons the Balkan General Staff never got going,' which at least is true and exact. But he does not explain actually why. I suppose that the author is not informed about the exact developments. or that Tempo concealed from the others our clearly formulated disagreement with the idea thus put forward by the YCP – something which can be clearly deduced from the quoted letter.

The assertion that we had delayed 'too much' our answer is also false. What is true is that, contrary to other suggestions of ours to step up our joint activities in Macedonia (which were discussed and considered overly long 'in view of their expediency') on this occasion Tempo had shown an unusual, inexplicable and suspicious impatience. And precisely because of the opposition (on our part, and probably also on the part of the other two communist parties), the idea about that General Staff – so dear to Tempo and, apparently, to the author of the quoted memoirs – never materialized....

But this was not all, either: along with his ceaseless attacks against the political line of the BWP, Tempo stubbornly tried to impose a unilateral, nationalistic, pan-Serbian stand on the question of Macedonia's future. At first more delicate and veiled, later, in the middle and second half of 1943, these attempts of his became overt, rude and insistent. Rejecting the indisputable fact that the majority of the Macedonian population was of Bulgarian nationality, the YCP representative fomented malicious anti-Bulgarian sentiments among the communists and other anti-fascists in Macedonia, without differentiating between the Bulgarian people and their revolutionary vanguard and the terrorist monarcho-fascist regime. What is more, both in front of Bulgaranov and of the Macedonian communist activists, he obtrusively and emphatically stated that 'in vain does the Bulgarian Party nurse illusions about an autonomous Macedonia, that it has been and would remain part of Yugoslavia'...*

*Almost all of these irresponsible allegations, inadmissible insults, attacks and vilifications of the BWP and the Bulgarian people, about which Boyan Bulgaranov kept us informed in his letters at the time, can now again be found in the two-volume memoirs by Svetozar Vukmanovic-Tempo (Революцијa, која тече. Београд, 1972). Regrettably now, too, in his role of a chronicler, Tempo has again shown himself in a bad light, as a disloyal partner and as a grossly biased witness of history. This book, written unscrupulously, abounding in concoctions, insults and insinuations, permeated by a spiteful anti-Bulgarian spirit, far from contributing to the settlement of disputes or to the clearing up of misunderstandings, on the contrary, paints a false picture of our relations, makes ill-intentioned use of old untrue assertions and appraisals, and fans new sparks of animosity between the parties and the peoples of the two countries. By the way, the reprehensible bias and gross subjectivism of these memoirs have been subjected to justified criticism even by a number of Yugoslav newspapers. It is indeed to be regretted that a fighter of the glorious anti-fascist phalanx has resorted to the pen as a weapon in order to accomplish unworthy ends. It is likewise to be regretted that Mihailo Apostolski and some other former leaders of the Macedonian organization joined Tempo and Kolisevski; taking advantage of our patience, tolerance and comradely good will, they started in chorus, as if under the baton of a common conductor, to chant in books and different other writings, all kinds of falsifications, abuses and accusations, disproved by history long since, once and for all.

Has not the time come at long last for all of us to heed the call of our class, party and internationalist duty?

Was this indeed the stand of the CC of the YCP? Up to that moment (autumn of 1943), the Yugoslav leadership had not yet come out with such open and clear aspirations as regards Macedonia. It is true that the First AVNOY Session in Bihać had adopted a resolution on the 'maintenance of the prewar status quo', but this referred only to Vardar Macedonia; moreover, it far from possessed the character of a finalized document-decision, leaving open the door – at least that's what we understood at the time – to a future (postwar) just and general settlement of the Macedonian issue, fully respecting the people's will and in consonance with the stands of the other Balkan progressive forces as well.

We were, of course, also informed about the other Tempo-inspired anti-Bulgarian actions, carried through by the imposed new leaderships of the Regional Committee in Macedonia and the Macedonian General Staff, but we still wanted to believe that all this was part of preliminary discussions and disputes in preparation for a just and overall postwar settlement of the question. J.B.Tito's above-mentioned article in *Proletar*, organ of the CC of the YCP, was interpreted by us in a similar sense.

What then?

The unresolved problem of Macedonia's future weighed as a millstone on the shoulders of our Party. The difficulties raised by Tempo (i.e., by the YCP leadership) also adversely affected our efforts to build up and consolidate the Fatherland Front, complicating relations with our allies. They were particularly sensitive to that problem, as the reader must have gathered from my correspondence with Dr Kiril Dramaliev. And the more conditions came to ahead for activating the Fatherland Front (in keeping with the approaching rout of nazi Germany), the more pressingly the question surfaced: how and on what basis would the national questions in the Balkans in general and the Macedonian issue, in particular, be settled?

And whereas the BWP was strictly abiding by the common concerted stand, which required that the Macedonian

issue be resolved in conformity with the freely expressed will of the Macedonian population, on the basis of a fraternal concord and with the assistance of all Balkan communist parties, the YCP suddenly made a complete turnabout in the late autumn of 1943 in Jajce and unilaterally backed out of the joint stand, as I wrote above.

In December 1943 we published the Statement of the Fatherland Front on the Macedonian Question, already familiar to the reader. Essentially it was an expression of a downright disagreement with any settlement likely to unilaterally invalidate the heretofore common internationalist stand on the Macedonian issue.

I think that the reader will easily understand and appreciate on its merit the wisdom and profound internationalism of the stand taken by our Party. If any Balkan state was historically justified in laying claim to Vardar Macedonia, this was undoubtedly Bulgaria. However, we were deeply aware that this controversial issue could be resolved equitably and in the interest of all Balkan states only by way of a fraternal agreement between all Balkan peoples and revolutionary movements.

Unfortunately, however, the Yugoslav leadership no longer shared that understanding. That is precisely why it reacted 'at daggers drawn' to the BWP stand as expressed in the Statement of the Fatherland Front.

On January 24, 1944, informed about our clear-cut position on the question, J.B.Tito sent a telegram to Georgi Dimitrov (in Moscow),which read: 'The Fatherland Front in Bulgaria has issued a leaflet on the Macedonian question. The line followed in the leaflet runs counter to the decision about a federation taken by AVNOY and demands a unifications of Macedonia, which should not be annexed to any country but be completely independent. At the present time, this is a German policy, which is inimical to the national liberation struggle.'

(There is no need to comment on the spirit of the telegram: the reader can see for himself how unwarranted the reaction to our just internationalist position was.)

In April 1944 Georgi Dimitrov was informed about J.B.Tito's dissatisfaction with the position of the Bureau in Exile of the BWP (which had not yet been acquainted with the full text of the AVNOY decisions in Jajce).

At that time, in connection with the new situation regarding the dispute about Macedonia, J.B.Tito wrote to Stalin personally and asked the question: 'Which is now the mainstay of the Soviet Union in Europe – Bulgaria or Yugoslavia?' And he himself answered: 'Yugoslavia!' (Central Party Archives, f.16, op. 5, archive unit 1498).

(Now again I shall refrain from commenting. However, I cannot pass over in silence one circumstance: just as in the former telegram, here again and still more cogently, an endeavour can be sensed to take advantage of a momentary situation unfavourable to Bulgaria, in order to settle an issue which is not conjunctural and which concerns the lasting, vitally important interests of the Bulgarian and the other peoples in the Balkans....)

On April 16, 1944, Georgi Dimitrov (already informed about the Jajce decisions), questioned by Stalin, explained the character and development of the Macedonian issue, pointing out its complexity and specificity. Dimitrov then added that the Bulgarian Party functionaries, Dimiter Vlahov and Vladimir Poptomov, had in Yugoslavia been elected as members of the Anti-fascist Assembly;he pointed out that neither of them (the former born in Aegean Macedonia, and the latter in Pirin Macedonia) had anything in common with the YCP and that they had been reared by the Bulgarian Communist Party, whose activists they were.

(In response to that, somewhat later J.B.Tito answered 'that a chance error has been committed' which would be corrected. In spite of the promise, however, Dimiter Vlahov was left in the composition of AVNOY, of which he had been elected deputy chairman.)

Further on in his answer to Stalin, Georgi Dimitrov elucidated the stand of the BWP on the Macedonian issue: the Party was and continued to be against the forcible in-

clusion of Macedonia within the boundaries of Bulgaria, while insisting that Macedonia's future be determined on the basis of a fraternal agreement between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, *taking into consideration the interests and free will of the Macedonian population itself.* Georgi Dimitrov emphasized that it was 'inadmissible for communists to engage in controversies' about future boundaries and territories.

Georgi Dimitrov concluded: 'It is hardly possible now to say definitely what concretely will happen to Macedonia after the war: at least I do not presume to do this.... The most desirable orientation in the Balkans, in my view,... would be the establishment of a federation of the southern Slavs. In that federation Macedonia would obtain its national freedom and statehood and would cease to be the apple of discord between the Balkan states.'

This assessment in essence refuted the justice of the resolution on the Macedonian question adopted by AVNOY at Jajce.

What were the developments after September 9, 1944?[23]

I shall try to briefly outline the new vicissitudes around the Macedonian problem.

In the very first months after fascist rule had been toppled in Bulgaria, the Macedonian question suddenly and trenchantly entered a new dramatic phase, entailing difficulties in the relations between the BWP and the YCP, between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia.

What were the causes? They were rooted in the fact that the YCP laid claims to a part of Bulgarian territory, wanting to include it within the confines of Yugoslavia.

What were their grounds? They were as paradoxical as were the claims. Referring to the unilateral decisions taken in Jajce (which, however, committed only the YCP and no other party, people or state in the Balkans) and contrary to the principles of internationalism and the norms of international law, the YCP tried 'to elaborate further' these

notorious decisions and to gobble up neighbouring lands. This land forming part of Bulgaria turned out to be the Pirin region (today's Blagoevgrad district) and its population, 'separated' from the bosom of the Bulgarian nation, was to be absorbed by the newly-established Macedonian Republic.

This is how the YCP considered it permissible to take advantage of the compromise concession made by the BWP in the spring of 1944 in the name of fraternity, anti-fascist unity and sincere cooperation between the Balkan peoples.

But let us briefly trace the chronology of developments in the period 1944-48, when matters were brought to a critical point.

Immediately after the establishment of people's rule in Bulgaria the Yugoslav leadership demanded that the Pirin region be annexed to the Macedonian Republic. And, showing diligence worthy of nobler deeds, it proceeded with 'immediate preparations' for the annexation of that Bulgarian region, crassly interfering in our country's internal affairs. The Politburo of the CC of the BWP was forced to take prompt measures in order to cut short those inadmissible actions; as noted in the minutes of the Politburo session, held on October 20, 1944, the leaders in Skopje were taking actions leading to the establishment of a state within the state, pursuing the direct goal of including the region of Gorna Djoumaya (now Blagoevgrad district) in the territory of the People's Republic of Macedonia.

On October 25, 1944, the Politburo again dealt with that question. Dimiter Ganev made a report on the situation which had arisen in that region, especially in the Petrich district, which the Skopje emissaries had designs of *immediately* including in the People's Republic of Macedonia. The regional Party committee, confused by that unprecedented conduct of the Skopje leaders, did not know whose directions it was to follow – ours or M.Apostolski's; the Skopje emissaries treated the annexation of the Pirin region to Yugoslav Macedonia as their 'internal question'.... And they insisted that the 'self-

determination' (as they understood it), i.e. the appropriation of the region, should take place immediately. What is more, they arrogantly stated that only because of 'the opportunism of the BWP' this had not been accomplished before and had been procrastinated.... Treating the BWP, Bulgaria and the Bulgarian people with an insulting and inadmissible disrespect, they declared: 'We are victors, you have been vanquished and will do what we order you to!....'

Naturally, the Politburo did not dally in taking the necessary measures to normalize the situation. At the same time Georgi Dimitrov immediately sent a telegram to J.B.Tito (October 27, 1944), in which he insisted that 'the Skopje people should not pose the question in practice of annexing Bulgarian Macedonia.'

In November 1944 the Politburo of our Party again examined the difficulties around the Macedonian issue, and at several consecutive sessions at that. On November 20, reporting on the visit he had just paid to Belgrade, Dobri Terpeshev said: 'Besides Tito, Tempo took part in our conversation on the Macedonian question. We reported on the acts of the Macedonians: detention of our people, plundering of warehouses, of sentinels, arrests.... Tempo insisted all the time that the Macedonians in Bulgaria should fight for the inclusion of the Petrich district in Yugoslavia ...'

At the Politburo session of November 30, 1944, Dimiter Ganev reported on the results of his mission to Skopje, where he had been sent to meet with the Macedonian leaders: this time they admitted their mistakes in bringing about the inadmissible situation in the Petrich district, but explained them... as personal mistakes committed by M.Apostolski.

Shortly afterwards, in his report to the Eighth Plenum of the CC of the BWP (February 27 – March 1, 1945), Krustyu Stoychev, Secretary of the Blagoevgrad regional committee, analyzed our mistaken concessions on the question of 'inclusion' and pointed out that the Skopje emissaries who, at that time, had flooded the whole of the

Pirin region, had already traced exactly where the new frontiers between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia was to run. Krustyu Stoychev also reported that the population of the Pirin region 'has agreed to a long-range unification in an integral Macedonia', but that it conceived that unification only and solely 'in an inextricable linkage with the Bulgarian people' and that it considered 'as inconceivable the raising of a barrier separating it from the Bulgarian people'.

In the meantime, after September 9, 1944, serious attempts were made to bring about a closer rapprochement between the two countries. In a letter to Traicho Kostov, dated December 1, 1944, Georgi Dimitrov gave instructions to establish more quickly 'an alliance between new Bulgaria and new Yugoslavia, a military, economic and political alliance as a beginning and foundation of the unification of the two countries in a federal state of the Southern Slavs.'

As was spelled out in the documents of the BWP at that time, *precisely in a federation, in which Macedonia would be an equal member, the unification of the Pirin region with the People's Republic of Macedonia would be possible;* in that case no frontiers would exist between the two countries and, more in particular, between Bulgaria and the People's Republic of Macedonia.

These documents bear proof that at the very beginning the BWP did what was necessary to divert the Yugoslav leadership from the nationalistic and hegemonistic path of 'an integral solution of the Macedonian question', as they understood it, within the confines of Yugoslavia.

Documents also show that, already towards the end of World War II and immediately after it, the YCP, taking advantage of an international situation unfavourable to Bulgaria, and in connection with preparations for the realization of the well-known idea of a federation of the Southern Slavs between the two states, succeeded in forcing concessions on the Macedonian issue favourable to Yugoslavia. In violation of the Leninist principles on the national question and employing all kinds of methods and propaganda means, the emissaries from Skopje, admitted

to the Pirin region, deployed an uprecedented campaign of inculcating 'a Macedonian national consciousness' among the local Bulgarian population. Precisely in such an abnormal situation of brutal and continuous pressure, which was meant to break the spontaneous resistance of the people, the notorious census of that time was taken, whose incorrect statistics were quoted later (and today, too) in Yugoslavia in an attempt to proclaim the people of that region 'Macedonian'....

I would like to repeat – the pressure on the part of Yugoslavia was excessive at that time and was exerted at a moment when Bulgaria, still treated as a former satellite of nazi Germany, had to bear part of the consequences of the defeat. We had not yet concluded a peace treaty. Skilfully manipulating with a situation unfavourable to Bulgaria, the Yugoslav leadership succeeded in imposing its nationalistic conception of Macedonia's structure. We had no alternative then but to agree to some undesirable and illegal concessions: decisions on the Macedonian question, adopted at the Tenth CC Plenum of the BWP in 1946 against the will of the Party and the people and contrary to the principles of law and justice, bore precisely such a character.

The Yugoslav leadership is now speculating with these decisions and that ill-fated 'census' in its endeavour to compel us to recognize a 'Macedonian minority' in Bulgaria, thereby actually pleading for the incorporation of the Blagoevgrad district into Yugoslavia (respectively in the Socialist Republic of Macedonia), precisely therein are rooted its 'reasons' for proclaiming the remaining Bulgarian population, which (as refugees and emigrants) had fled from Macedonia to different parts of our country, as a 'Macedonian minority.'

But if, somehow or other, the Tenth CC Plenum agreed to those mistaken concessions, adopting the above decisions, this did not mean that the Party would immediately plunge headlong and rashly into their realization. A whole set of important questions of principle had to be

specified and elucidated. This led to the Bled meeting in the summer of 1947 between Georgi Dimitrov and J.B.Tito, which was to prepare a treaty on a union between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia: at that time, as documents show, an exceedingly important correction was introduced into the decisions on Macedonia,a correction which by and large rectified the formulations allowed in the Tenth Plenum decisions. On this occasion Georgi Dimitrov noted in his diary (August 1, 1947):

'We agreed with Tito and with the president of the Macedonian Government on a common policy on Macedonian affairs. *No action will be taken to directly include the Pirin region in the Macedonian Republic.*'

And something more: the draft treaty discussed in Bled provided for the Pirin region's inclusion in the People's Republic of Macedonia as well as for a return to Bulgaria of the Western parts, which it had been deprived of by the Treaty of Neuilly (1919), *after a union had been brought about between the People's Republic of Bulgaria and the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, i.e. after their unification in a federation, when the frontiers between Bulgaria and Macedonia would be obliterated.*

After the meeting in Bled, however, contrary to the proposals, all of a sudden the Yugoslav leaders slakened the pressure and slowed down the pace of establishing a federation, which they pretended so much to desire, began to procrastinate discussions on the question until in the end they actually dropped that idea. This is borne out by the following letter, addressed to Georgi Dimitrov and dated March 14, 1948, in which the YCP announced: 'As we have been informed, some of your functionaries are saying that there will be a federation between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria in two or three months. The CC of the YCP is of the opinion that at present it is still too early to speak of a federation.'

The reasons for that actual refusal were, by the way, quite clear to us: the federation, as conceived by Georgi Dimitrov and as solely possible between the two countries,

was not at all to the liking of the Yugoslav leadership.

Here is how Georgi Dimitrov saw more specifically the character of that federation. In a letter to Traicho Kostov dated January 13, 1945, he wrote: 'The new draft (for a federation) as put forward by the Yugoslav comrades, cannot be accepted. *Its essential feature is a tendency to absorb Bulgaria by Yugoslavia.*

'The Yugoslav comrades fail to bear in mind that this is not purely and simply a matter of including Bulgaria in a Yugoslav federation (with the rights enjoyed by Serbia and Croatia), *but to establish out of today's Federative Yugoslavia and Bulgaria a bilateral unified (federal) state based on an equal footing.*

'This basic idea was laid down in our draft and *we cannot and should not give it up.*'

In another letter to Traicho Kostov (dated April 9, 1945) Georgi Dimitrov informed him about a conversation between himself and J.B.Tito, in which Dimitrov drew Tito's attention to the existing unsound sentiments in their midst as regards our Party'. In this connection Dimitrov explicitly wrote:

'Our stand as regards the Yugoslav comrades should, naturally, be extremely friendly but also strictly principled and fully dignified in a Party and national respect.'

Thus the dishonest manoeuvres and expansionist appetites were cut short and a new historical injustice towards Bulgaria and the Bulgarian people was frustrated. In his report to the Fifth Congress of the BCP (1948), dwelling on the Macedonian question and relations with YCP, Georgi Dimitrov pointed out that, in connection with the idea of a federation, our country had acted vigorously and enthusiastically, relying on the loyalty of the Yugoslav leadership; in response, however, the latter had refused to hold further negotiations and had brought 'to the fore the question of annexing the Pirin region'. Our Party was deceived, Georgi Dimitrov added, and emphasized that the population of the Pirin region had since time immemorial

been an inseparable part of the Bulgarian nation, connected with it by blood links, economically, politically and culturally, and had no wish to be separated from it....*

In view of the fact that in Yugoslavia people are now speculating with the name of Dimitrov, distorting his positions and speaking about a certain 'difference' between the Dimitrovian line and the line of our present Party leadership, let me quote Georgi Dimitrov's exact words on the problem of Macedonia at the Fifth Congress.

'In the present internal and international situation,' Georgi Dimitrov said in the section "The Federation of the Southern Slavs and the Macedonian Question", 'the vital interests of the Bulgarian and the Yugoslav peoples imperatively called for accomplishing as close a rapprochement as possible between the two countries, which would lead at the earliest to their economic, state and political unity, to the formation of a federation of the Southern Slavs. Such a federation, relying on friendship with the Soviet Union and in fraternal collaboration with the other people's democratic republics, would be in a position to successfully defend the freedom and independence of our peoples and to ensure their proper development along the road to socialism. Within such a federation, the unresolved problems inherited from the old bourgeois-monarchic regimes would have found their correct solution....

'Our Party embarked vigorously and enthusiastically along that road, relying on the promise of the Yugoslav communists, to whom we have been bound by long years of joined work and friendship. This is upheld by our Party today, too. But this only correct road was abandoned by the nationalistic leaders of Yugoslavia. After a number

*This population (as, indeed, the majority of the population of Vardar Macedonia) has never and nowhere in the history of Europe and of Bulgaria been considered and called otherwise than Bulgarian, an organic component of the Bulgarian state. This is borne out by countless historical documents, chronicles, archaeological monuments, folklore, as well as by all demographic surveys and official statistics in the past few centuries, Turkish statistics included.

of undertakings related to the forthcoming formation of a federation had been discussed and decided upon between the governments of the two countries, the Central Committee of the Yugoslav Communist Party declared to our Party last March that it had a different view on this question, that one should not hurry with the federation, and refused to hold further negotiations. At the same time the Yugoslav leaders brought to the fore the transformation of the Pirin region into an autonomous region with a view to its annexation to Yugoslavia, regardless of the existing agreement on setting up a federation....'

Speaking about the agreement in Bled, which aimed at facilitating the process of rapprochement and unification of the future population of the Macedonian regions in the two countries, Dimitrov continued:

'But our Party was deceived in its good faith by the Belgrade and Skopje leaders. Most of the teachers and booksellers sent from Skopje, obviously on instructions from their Yugoslav leaders, turned into agents of pan-Yugoslav and anti-Bulgarian chauvinist propaganda....

'What Kolisevski's agents were doing in the Pirin region was only a reflection of what was happening in the People's Republic of Macedonia itself. On the pretext of combating great-Bulgarian chauvinism, with the help of the state apparatus and of all other social, political and cultural organizations, a systematic drive was and is being conducted here against everything Bulgarian, against the Bulgarian people, against their culture, against the rule of the people's democracy, against the Fatherland Front, and especially against our Party. No Bulgarian books and Bulgarian newspapers, including the *Rabotnichesko Delo*, are allowed in the People's Republic of Macedonia. All Bulgarian inscriptions on old school buildings and other monuments have been carefully effaced. The family names as, for instance, Kolishev, Ouzounov, Tsvetkov, and others, have become, as we know, Kolisevski, Ouzounovski, Tsvetkovski, with the sole aim of bearing no resemblance to Bulgarian names.

'Officials in the Macedonian People's Republic do not feel embarrassed to make statements spearheaded against the Bulgarian people and the People's Republic of Bulgaria. Kolisevski's speech delivered on March 23 of this year is well known.... General Tempo has gone so far in his chauvinistic spite as to dare utter the basest of outrages and insults concerning the anti-fascist struggle waged by the Bulgarian people and our partisan movement, and this, please note, in spite of the universally known fact that our partisans fought together with the Yugoslav partisans, and our troops took an active part, under the command of Marshal Tolbukhin, in the war for the final liberation of Yugoslavia.'[24]

This is the development of the Macedonian question after September 9, 1944. It should be clear to the reader that, after the rejection of Dimitrov's idea about a federation by the YCP, this question actually and practically lost its historical topicality.

In addition, I have to make several remarks both on the principled aspect of the dispute and, in connection with the undignified current attempts on the part of Yugoslavia to coerce us again into adopting the absurd Yugoslav position on the question of the Pirin region (Blagoevgrad district) an of the non-existent 'Macedonian minority' in Bulgaria.

Let us for a moment go back again to the AVNOY decisions on the Macedonian question taken in Jajce, when the YCP officially formulated in a state and party document its nationalistic aspirations towards Macedonia. By unilaterally proclaiming that the Macedonian question 'should be resolved within the framework of Yugoslavia', the YCP in fact appropriated the Vardar part of Macedonia (the future People's Republic of Macedonia), including it within the boundaries of Yugoslavia. But, what's more: in the resolution of the Second AVNOY Session, the Yugoslav leadership made purely expansionist encroachments upon regions, which up to the war had belonged to two neighbouring states and had never been part of the territory of old Yugoslavia. And this was inadmissible.

Along with all that, this part of the decisions taken in Jajce, according to Yugoslav authors, turned out to have the power not only of proclaiming the creation and inclusion of the future People's Republic of Macedonia in Federal Yugoslavia; these decisions obtained the magical power of 'giving birth' to a new nationality in the Balkans – 'the Macedonian nationality'...

When at the time, under the pressure of the circumstances, we agreed to the decisions of Jajce, relating to Vardar Macedonia, this by no means implied (as it had been interpreted by the YCP) an automatic 'recognition' of a 'Macedonian nation'. Purely and simply, because any half-way educated person in the world knows that Vardar Macedonia, together with the overwhelming part of its population, has since time immemorial been bone of the bone and flesh of the flesh of the Bulgarian lands and the Bulgarian people.

It is alleged that, after the war, a new nation in the Balkans, called 'Macedonian', has been taking shape in the Vardar part of Macedonia. But does this mean that the Slav population of that region, Bulgarian in origin and history, spirit and culture, has, automatically and by some magic, turned into a 'Macedonian' population? It is clear to every civilized person that the formation of a new nation is a slow, long and complicated historical process, which lasts long, often centuries.... Besides, the formation of a 'Macedonian nation' does not mean at all that the Bulgarian population of that region should be deprived of history. If the decisions in Jajce had the power of setting up a new republic, they in no way could be backdated, so as to deprive that land and its native Slav population of its historical belonging to the Bulgarian stock, to the Bulgarian language and culture.

When in the spring of 1944 we accepted the decision that a Macedonian republic was to be established, this far from means that we agreed to the obliteration of that old Bulgarian land from the memory of history. This would

have been absurd and inconceivable. It would have meant renouncing our essential historical past, of which this land and its population are organically inseparable; it would have meant renouncing the lifework of the brothers Cyril and Methodius; renouncing the light shed by Kliment of Ohrid, Nahoum, Angelarii; renouncing the tragic glory of Samuil and the heroic exploit of his blinded soldiers; it would have meant deleting Paissi of Bansko and his sacred 'Slav-Bulgarian History' from our national history and from the National Revival epic; it would have meant depriving ourselves of the heroic exploits of the haiduk chetas, of the struggles for church freedom and autonomy, of the heroic popular uprisings, beginning with the April 1876 Uprising and ending with the Kresna-Razlog and the St Elija's Day uprisings; it would have meant wiping clean from the mind of generations and from historical chronicles such legendary names, embodying the pride and brilliance of the Bulgarian spirit, as the Miladinov Brothers and Raiko Zhinzifov, Grigor Purlichev, Gotsé Delchev, Peré Toshev, Yané Sandanski; finally, it would have meant eliminating from our revolutionary and national history the lifework and characters of Dimiter Blagoev and Georgi Dimitrov, the poetry of Hristo Smyrnenski and Nikola Vaptsarov.... Is there indeed a single Bulgarian capable of doing this?!

If in the Macedonian republic a process of forming a new national consciousness ('Macedonian') was ushered in with incredible diligence and imposed by all available permissible and illicit means, this in no way means that it is spreading also to the other masses of Bulgarians, inhabiting the Pirin region or settled as refugees in the other parts of Bulgaria. This population has been and will remain an inseparable part of the core of the Bulgarian nation; it has been living and will continue to live with its sorrows and aspirations; it took part alongside in the life-and-death struggle for freedom and social justice. Far from falling under the influence of 'the national transformation', to which the population in Vardar Macedonia was subjected, it

rejected vehemently and categorically all and any attempts to be separated, detached from or pitted against the remaining part of the Bulgarian people. The attempt to present these Bulgarians as 'a Macedonian minority' with their own language, history and culture, different from those of the Bulgarian nation, is a flagrant interference in Bulgaria's internal affairs.

No Macedonian question now exists as far as Bulgaria is concerned.

As to the Socialist Republic of Macedonia, the Bulgarian Communist Party and the Bulgarian people sincerely rejoice at its successes in socialist construction. Guided by realism and inspired by an invariable desire for peace, good-neighbourly relations, sincere friendship and understanding with all Balkan states, we wish further successes and prosperity to the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the Socialist Republic of Macedonia included. Our Party and our country have time and again declared that they recognize the existing realities in present-day Yugoslavia, which have come as a result of World War II. These realities, regulated by the Constitution and the other fundamental laws of Yugoslavia, are an entirely internal affair of that country. As to the question what peoples and nations are now living in Yugoslavia, this is a question of the population itself: Bulgaria has not interfered and has no intention of interfering in determining the existing realities either in this or in the other states in the Balkans and in the world.

At the same time we cannot help expressing concern over the fact that 'the formation of a Macedonian nation' in the Socialist Republic of Macedonia is occurring on a malicious, aggressively anti-Bulgarian basis. A whole army of 'agitators' and 'enlighteners' are working hard, falsifying universally known and acknowledged historical facts, fanning old nationalistic enmities, appropriating most unceremoniously the historical and cultural heritage of the Bulgarian people, crassly distorting their national history. And all this, of course, poisons the relations between the two

countries and again spreads an atmosphere of tensions and alarm in the Balkans.

Concluding my reflections on the Macedonian question, I would like to express my heartfelt hope that all these differences will finally subside, that the time will come when the persistent constructive efforts of the Bulgarian Communist Party to normalize relations with that fraternal country will at long last meet with the desired reciprocity, that passions will cool down and that the name Macedonia will no longer be a divide but become a connecting link between the Balkan peoples in their peaceful development.*

*From the third volume *Victory* of the memoir trilogy *Call of Duty* – (Editor's note)

## EXPLANATORY NOTES

[1] Fatherland Front – a union of patriotic and democratic anti-fascist forces, founded in 1942 on the initiative and under the leadership of the Bulgarian Communist Party. Its programme, elaborated by the Party's Bureau in Exile under the direction of Georgi Dimitrov, was announced on July 17, 1942 over the underground Hristo Botev radio station. The main programme tasks were: (1) break of Bulgaria's alliance with nazi Germany, (2) overthrow of the anti-popular monarcho-fascist government, and (3) establishment of a Fatherland Front government, which would ensure the nation's democratic and independent political and economic development. The National Committee of the Fatherland Front, set up in 1943, comprised representatives of the Bulgarian Communist Party, of the left wing of the Bulgarian Agrarian Party and the Social Democratic Party, the Zveno political circle and independent intellectuals.

[2] Dr Kiril Dramaliev – prominent functionary of the Bulgarian Communist Party, Ph.D. in German language and literature; in 1942-44 BCP representative in the National Committee of the Fatherland Front.

[3] *Rabotnichesko Delo* – underground printed organ of the CC of the Bulgarian Communist Party.

[4] Bulgarian Workers' Party – the name of the Bulgarian Communist Party in 1938-44; in 1944-48 – Bulgarian Workers' Party (communists), and since the Fifth Congress (December 1948), Bulgarian Communist Party.

[5] Kimon Georgiev (1882-1969) – in the first half of his political career a leading functionary of bourgeois-reactionary and anti-communist groupings: a founder and leader of the Zveno political circle; Prime Minister of the Zveno government established by a military coup on May 19, 1934 until January 1935. In the late '30s he gradually drew closer to the aspirations of the people. In 1942 he was among the first prominent bourgeois-democratic figures with an anti-fascist orientation to accept the BCP's invitation to join the Fatherland Front, of whose National Committee he became a member in 1943 as representative (and leader) of the Zveno political circle. He played an important role in strengthening the FF and in bringing about its victory over fascism and the monarchy, in recognition of which he headed the first FF government in Bulgaria after September 9,1944.

[6] Nikola D.Petkov (1893-1947), leader of the left wing of the Bulgarian Agrarian Party. One of the first petty-bourgeois democratic politicians to join the Fatherland Front, of whose Naional Committee he became a member in 1943. Ideologically unstable and inconsistent in his political actions, N.Petkov only half-heartedly contributed to the strengthening and development of the FF. On September 9, 1944 he became minister in the first FF government, but soon showed his true colour and passed over to the opposition. He ended his political career as an enemy of the people's democratic rule.

[7] Bureau in Exile of the CC of the BCP – set up by Georgi Dimitrov and Vassil Kolarov as a representation in exile of the Party after the September 1923 Uprising to assist the CC inside the country, it functioned as supreme Party organ of guidance from 1923 to 1944. From 1928 the party conferences and plenums periodically elected both a central committee to work inside the country and a Bureau in Exile, which operated outside Bulgaria and with the Executive Committee of the Comintern. The two bodies

cooperated in working out the Party's political line. Until the end of 1944, when it ceased operating, the Bureau in Exile was headed by Georgi Dimitrov, who directed its activity and the overall struggle of the BCP against capitalism, fascism and the monarchy.

[8] Grigor Cheshmedjiev (1873-1945) – a leading functionary of the Bulgarian Social Democratic Party. During World War II he opposed the nazi orientation of the monarcho-fascist government. As a leader of the left wing of the Social Democratic Party, he took part in the foundation of the Fatherland Front, and in 1943 became a member of its National Committee. After the victory on September 9, 1944, he became a minister in the first FF government. Subsequently, however, he joined the opposition and ended his political career as an enemy of the people's democratic rule.

[9] Dimiter Blagoev (1856-1924) – one of the first organizers of Marxist groups in Russia. Expelled by the czarist secret police, he returned to his homeland and became the first organizer of the Bulgarian socialist movement, founder and leader of the Marxist Party of the Bulgarian working class, set up in 1891 – today's Bulgarian Communist Party. The foremost proletarian revolutionary and threorist of Marxism in Bulgaria and in the Balkans in the late 19th and the first quarterof the 20th century.

[10] All-Soviet Communist Party (Bolsheviks) – the name of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in the period between its 14th Congress (1925) and its 19th Congress (1952), when it adopted its present name.

[11] Russo-Turkish War of Liberation (1877-78) – the war between Russia and Turkey for the liberation of the Bulgarian and other Balkan peoples from Ottoman domination. Precipitated by the ruthless suppression of the April 1876 Uprising in Bulgaria, it ended after bloody

battles, with the active assistance of the Bulgarian volunteers and the whole Bulgarian people, in the defeat of the centuries-old enslaver. According to the peace treaty signed on February 19 (March 3), 1878 in San Stefano, Turkey recognized the liberation of all Bulgarian lands and the restoration of the Bulgarian state within its historical and ethnic boundaries, including Macedonia, the Adrianople part of Thrace and Southern Dobroudja.

[12] The Berlin Congress of 1878 – convened three months after the capitulation of Turkey under the pressure of the Western Powers, it revised the San Stefano Peace Treaty and restored Turkish rule over the old Bulgarian lands of Macedonia and the Adrianople part of Thrace, while Northern Dobroudja was given to Romania. According to its terms, a Bulgarian Principality extending from the Danube to the Balkan Range and including Sofia, was established; the territory between the Balkan Range and the Rhodopes became an autonomous region known as Eastern Roumelia. As a result of a strong popular movement, the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Roumelia were unified in September 1885, a historical step speeding up the economic, political and cultural development of the newly-liberated Bulgarian state.

[13] The April 1876 Uprising – the high point of the Bulgarian people's struggle against the almost 500-year long Ottoman yoke, for freedom and national independence. Despite the mass heroism, it was crushed, but it played a historical role in drawing the attention and in arousing the sympathies of progressive world public opinion to the tragic fate of the Bulgarian people. These sentiments found the strongest expression in Russia, where a genuine popular movement developed for the liberation of the Bulgarian and the other enslaved Slav peoples in the Balkans, a movement, which led to the liberating Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78.

[14] Zahari Stoyanov's 'Notes....' – the memoirs of a prominent

Bulgarian national revolutionary and writer, one of the organizers and participants in the April 1876 Uprising. In his book Zahari Stoyanov recreates with moving force, penetrating realism and deep conviction the heroic exploit of the risen Bulgarian people and their surge towards freedom.

[15] The Neuilly diktat – the author means the Neuilly peace treaty of 1919, an unjust peace treaty imposed by the Entente on Bulgaria after its defeat in World War I. According to its terms, Bulgaria was shorn of its access to the Aegean which went to Greece, as well as of a total of 11,278 sq km of its territory (Western Thrace, Stroumitsa and its district, Bossilegrad, Tsaribrod and part of the region of Koula), which was included in Yugoslavia, while Southern Dobroudja, of which it had been deprived in 1913, remained part of Romania.

[16] The September 1923 Uprising – the world's first mass anti-fascist uprising, organized and led by the Bulgarian Communist Party, with the aim of overthrowing the monarcho-fascist distatorship and of establishing a worker-peasant rule. It was joined by left wing agrarians, members of the united front,by non-affiliated anti-fascists and various left groups.

[17] Left sectarianism – a political line imposed by the left-sectarian faction which had taken over the leadership of the BCP in the period 1929-34, characterized by dogmatism in theory and cut-and-dried patterns in practice, lack of realism in political activity and nihilism in the approach to the national question. It caused considerable harm to the development of the Bulgarian revolutionary movement. Ideologically defeated, outlived as a theory and practice after the Seventh Comintern Congress, when the Party, led by Georgi Dimitrov, forged a United Workers' and Popular Front of all democratic and anti-fascist forces and gradually developed into a Party of a new and Leninst type.

[18] The policy of the Bulgarian monarcho-fascist government – its treacherous policy which, contrary to the clearly expressed will of the people, separated Bulgaria from and opposed it to its natural ally, the USSR, the eventually hitched Bulgaria to the Axis bandwagon (March 1941), involving it in the disastrous aggressive policy of the nazi bloc, turning it into a satellite and an agrarian appendage of nazi Germany. The people and their militant vanguard, the Communist Party, firmly opposed that policy and launched a mass struggle to overthrow the regime of treason and terror, in the name of a free, independent and democratic Bulgaria.

[19] Traicho Kostov (1897-1949) – one of the prominent leaders and architects of the Bulgarian Communist Party and the People's Republic of Bulgaria. From 1940 to 1942, political secretary of the CC of the BWP and editor of the party organ the *Rabotnichesko Delo*. In the spring of 1942 he was arrested, tried and thrown into prison, from which he emerged on September 9, 1944, the day of the people's victory.

[20] Anton Ivanov (1884-1942) – one of the outstanding architects and leaders of the Bulgarian Communist Party in the years of struggle against capitalism and monarcho-fascism, a close comrade-in-arms of Georgi Dimitrov and Vassil Kolarov from the beginning of the century. Member of the CC of the BCP and, in the second half of the '30s, member of the Bureau in Exile of the CC of the BCP. From January 1940 to April 1942, member of the Politburo and one of the organizers and leaders of the armed anti-fascist struggle. Arrested in April 1942, he was sentenced to death and executed by a firing squad in July, together with a group of functionaries of the CC of the BCP.

[21] Policy of all-out armed anti-fascist struggle – the policy adopted by the Bulgarian Communist Party immediately after the nazi invasion of the USSR. At its first session

called on June 23-24, 1941, its Politburo defined it as a line of uncompromising struggle by all means – armed, political and economic, directed against the nazi aggressors and their Bulgarian stooges. In the war years, all sound anti-fascist, patriotic and democratic forces, united in the Fatherland Front, joined ranks under the militant banner of the Party.

[22] ELAS – the People's Liberation Army of Greece, founded in December 1941 by the National Liberation Front (EAM). Both ELAS and EAM were formed on the initiative of the Greek Communist Party after Greece's occupation by nazi Germany in April 1941.

[23] September 9, 1944 – V-Day of the armed anti-fascist uprising of the people, rallied in the Fatherland Front and led by the Communist Party, made possible by the rapid advance of the Soviet Army, which reached the northern frontiers of Bulgaria. The culmination of decades of the Bulgarian people's armed struggle, organized and led by the BCP, against capitalism and monarcho-fascism, this historic victory opened the way to the construction of socialism in Bulgaria.

[24] Participation of Bulgarian troops in the final liberation of Yugoslavia – in September 1944 people's democratic Bulgaria joined the anti-nazi coalition and took an active part in what became known as the Patriotic War for the final defeat of nazi Germany. In its first phase (September-November 1944), the renovated Bulgarian People's Army helped liberate Yugoslavia, driving, together with the units of the Yugoslav People's Liberation Army, the nazis out of Macedonia, South Serbia, Kossovo and Metohia. During the second phase (December 1944 - May 1945) the First Bulgarian Army, 100,000-strong, fought under the supreme command of the Third Ukrainian Front of the Red Army in

battles for the liberation of Hungary and Austria, reaching the foothills of the Alps. Total casualties accounted to over 32,000 killed and scores of thousands of wounded. New Bulgaria's participation in the war against nazi Germany more or less rehabilitated it in the eyes of the world.

*The present pamphlet is an excerpt from a book entitled Victory, which is the third volume of the trilogy of memoirs of Tsola Dragoycheva, member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party. It deals with the so-called 'Macedonian question', which for years has been artificially whipped up by the Yugoslav side, representing it in an untrue and biased light.*

*Tsola Dragoycheva's memoirs resurrect the decades of heroic struggle waged by the Bulgarian people against capitalism and fascism, in which she took an active personal part. At the same time the authoress describes important circumstances and states facts in a logical chronological order, connected with the stands of the Bulgarian Communist Party and the Yugoslav Communist Party on the 'Macedonian question' during the anti-fascist resistance (1941-44) and in the early years after the victory of the socialist revolution in Bulgaria. Throughout that period, as member of the Politburo of BCP's Central Committee, and for some time as the latter's Secretary, she helped elaborate and implement the foreign policy of the BCP and during the period of the anti-fascist struggle she was in charge of the Party's relations with the revolutionary movements in the Balkans, the Yugoslav Communist Party included.*

*This excerpt from Tsola Dragoycheva's memoirs is, in short, a first-hand account and hence a major contribution to the presentation of the 'Macedonian question' in its true light.*

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TSOLA DRAGOYCHEVA

MACEDONIA – NOT A CAUSE OF DISCORD BUT A FACTOR OF GOOD NEIGHBOURLINESS AND COOPERATION

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